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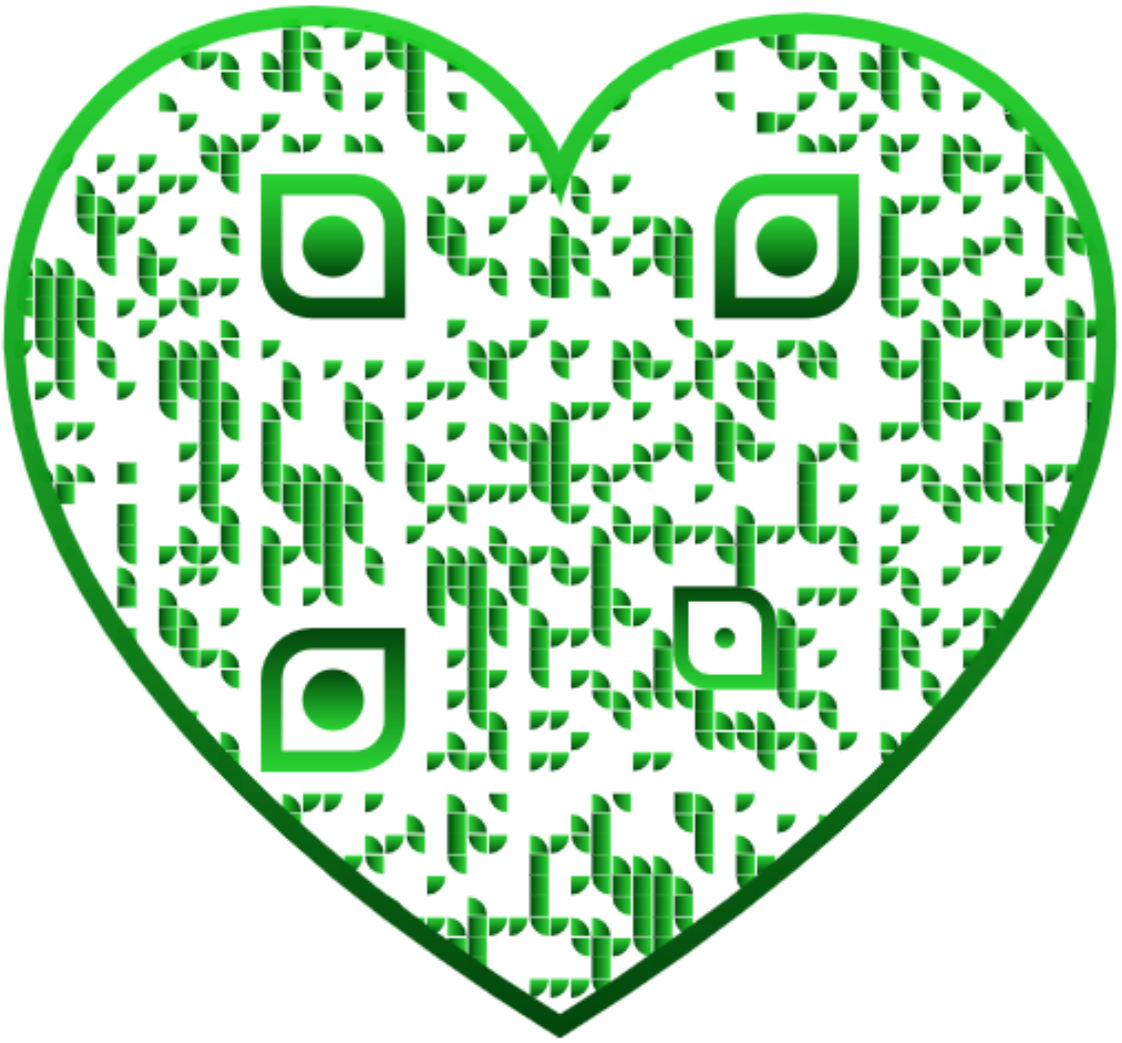

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DOWN UNDER DUDES

Team Chili, consisting of (from left) John Frusciante, Flea, Chad Smith and Anthony Kiedis, huddled up for this portrait ahead of the MTV Australia Video Music Awards, which took place at Sydney's Acer Arena (now Qudos Bank Arena) on April 29, 2007. The band would go on to win Best Group for "Dani California."

CHILI
PEPPERS

VOICE FOR CHOICE

In the second year of Rock for Choice, a series of abortion-rights benefit concerts organized by the band L7 and the Feminist Majority Foundation, Kiedis and the Chilis performed at L.A.'s Hollywood Palladium on Sept. 27, 1992, on a bill that included Courtney Love, Mudhoney and Exene Cervenka.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

WHY WE LOVE THE

BY CHUCK ARNOLD

Famous first for baring their bums, the genre-busting California rockers have lasted in the biz by baring their souls

WHEN THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS stormed onto the music scene in the ’80s, they were a bunch of funky punks who could both rock and rap. The wild boys — who didn’t seem to own a shirt between them — were a rowdy novelty who were part Iggy Pop, part George Clinton, part Grandmaster Flash.

Known for rocking in the raw — with nothing but tube socks keeping their private parts private — they were branded a gimmicky party band that was not to be taken too seriously. And there was always the sense that they might crash and burn from their own hard partying: In fact, founding guitarist Hillel Slovak died of a heroin overdose in 1988.

But somehow, against all odds, the Chili Peppers made it through to the “Otherside.” And 40 years after releasing their self-titled debut on Aug. 10, 1984, the quartet of singer Anthony Kiedis, bassist Flea, guitarist John Frusciante and drummer Chad Smith is still adding to their long list of laurels, which includes six Grammys, eight MTV Video Music Awards (plus the 2000 Video Vanguard Award and the 2022 Global Icon Award) and a 2012 induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Forty-two years after Kiedis, Flea, Slovak and original drummer Jack Irons formed the Chili Peppers as schoolmates at Fairfax High in Los Angeles, the band has transcended generations as well as genres. But even if they are now elder statesmen of rock, with all but Frusciante in their 60s, Kiedis and Flea still have a disdain for shirts — and they can both still pull off the bare-chested flex.

As the Chili Peppers are embraced by both O.G. fans and their kids, they remain one of the few rock bands that can still fill a stadium. And they aren’t showing any signs of slowing down: After returning from a six-year album hiatus with *Unlimited Love* in April 2022, they quickly followed that up with *Return of the Dream Canteen* six months later. As they get set to enter their fifth decade, here’s hoping that they can’t stop.

ICON STATUS

The band posted this photo on Twitter (now X) in 2022, the year they received the Global Icon Award at the MTV Video Music Awards.

HEADLINE NEWS

In his acceptance speech for the Chilis' MTV Global Icon Award in 2022, Kiedis (here circa the early 1990s), thanked his fellow band members "for giving me a purpose in my life for the last 40 years. I would have been a free-floating disaster in space if not for these boys, so thank you, boys, for giving me something to do with my life, and love."

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BRING ON THE FUNK

BY ROY TRAKIN

Raised and praised in the early ’80s L.A. punk scene, the Chilis stood out for their wild antics but wildly good fusion of rock and R&B

ROARING '20s

With two albums already in the Chilis' discography, Flea (left) and Anthony Kiedis grew in confidence (if not maturity) during this professional shoot in 1986.

FAST FRIENDS

The bond between Kiedis (at 12 with sister Julie, top inset) and Flea (then known as Michael Peter Balzary, above, at 14) was sealed as soon as they met in 1976. "I came home from school that day and said, 'Mom, for the first time in my life I've found someone I can talk to,'" Flea recalled in his 2019 autobiography, *Acid for the Children*, then added, "Anthony told his mom, 'I've found someone who will try anything, I've never had a friend like this before.'" The pair have many photos together, including an undated black-and-white shot (far right) and one at an L.A. punk-band hangout nicknamed the Wilton Hilton (near right).

HORN OF PLENTY

With jazz greats like Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie as his musical heroes, Flea (left, in an undated image) took to the trumpet with ease, winning a scholarship for private lessons. As he wrote in his autobiography, "I often think about what a better player I'd have been if I was diligent. But then I wouldn't be the animal I am."

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE RED HOT Chili Peppers could only be the City of Angels, the home turf they so often referenced in their genre-busting fusion of rock and soul.

Formed in West Hollywood in the early '80s, the band originally consisted of four high school classmates from far-flung backgrounds: vocalist Anthony Kiedis, a Michigander who moved to the area when he was 12; Melbourne, Australia-born bassist Michael Peter Balzary, who told Larry King he got the nickname Flea from being a fidgety teen; Israeli American guitarist Hillel Slovak, whose family immigrated to the U.S. when he was 4; and drummer Jack Irons, the lone kid from L.A.

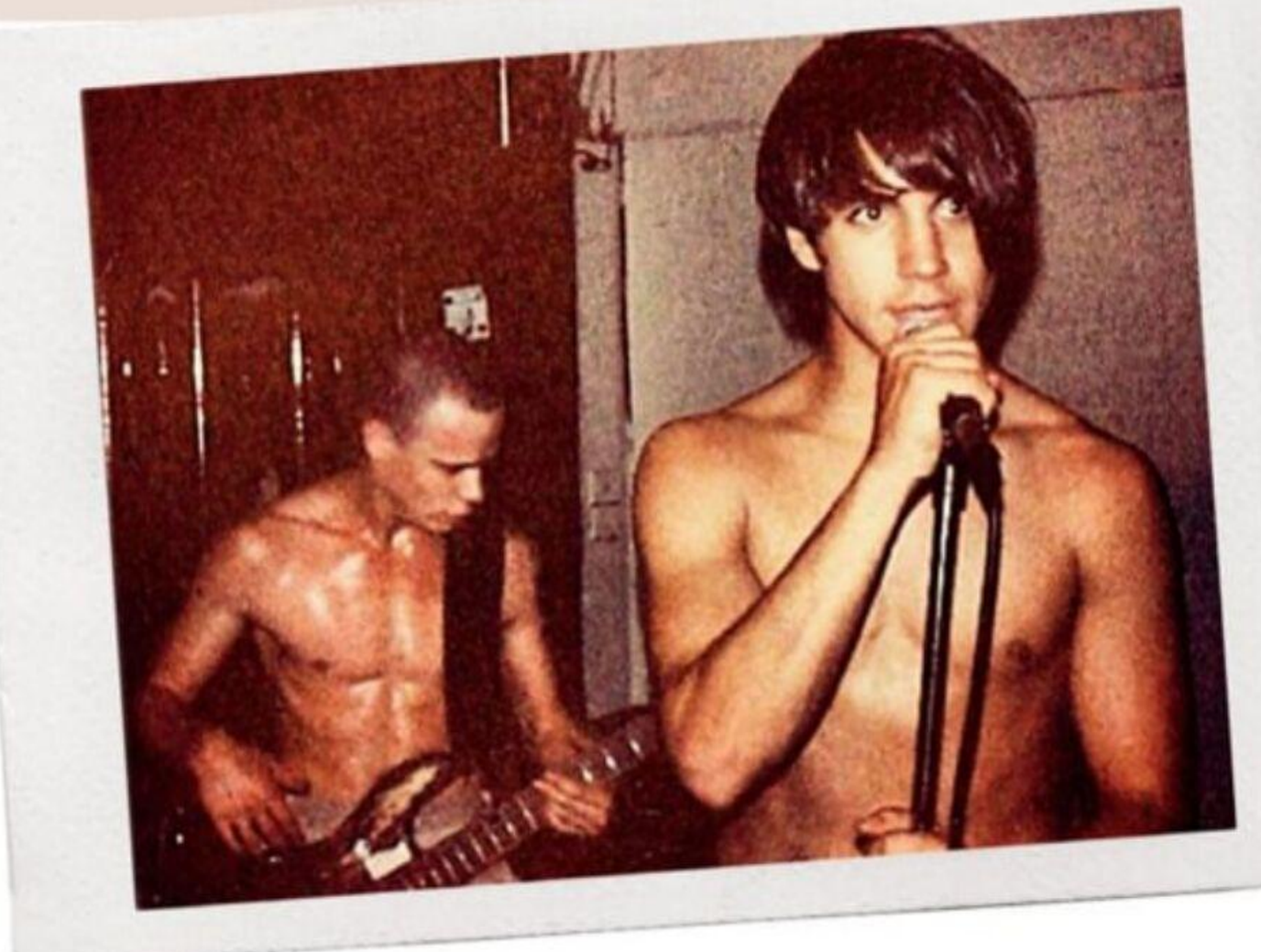
Irons and Slovak started taking music lessons when they were 13 and really into Kiss. "We spent weeks on the costumes," Irons told *Rolling Stone* in May 2022. "We'd go around L.A. and find the store with rhinestones. We'd sneak around Hollywood Boulevard, where I wasn't allowed at the time, to find some giant-heel shoes I could make into boots."

After adding Flea to their musical circle, the pair met Kiedis at Fairfax High. Soon, Kiedis would end up at Iron's house, either jamming or listening to Irons rehearse with Slovak and their pal, Alain Johannes. "He was a really good friend of Flea's, so he became a really good friend of ours," Irons explained of Kiedis. "It was very high school."

Although Irons, Slovak and Johannes spent most of their post-graduation time in a band called What Is This, Flea and Kiedis were "much more out in the scene," Irons said, referencing >

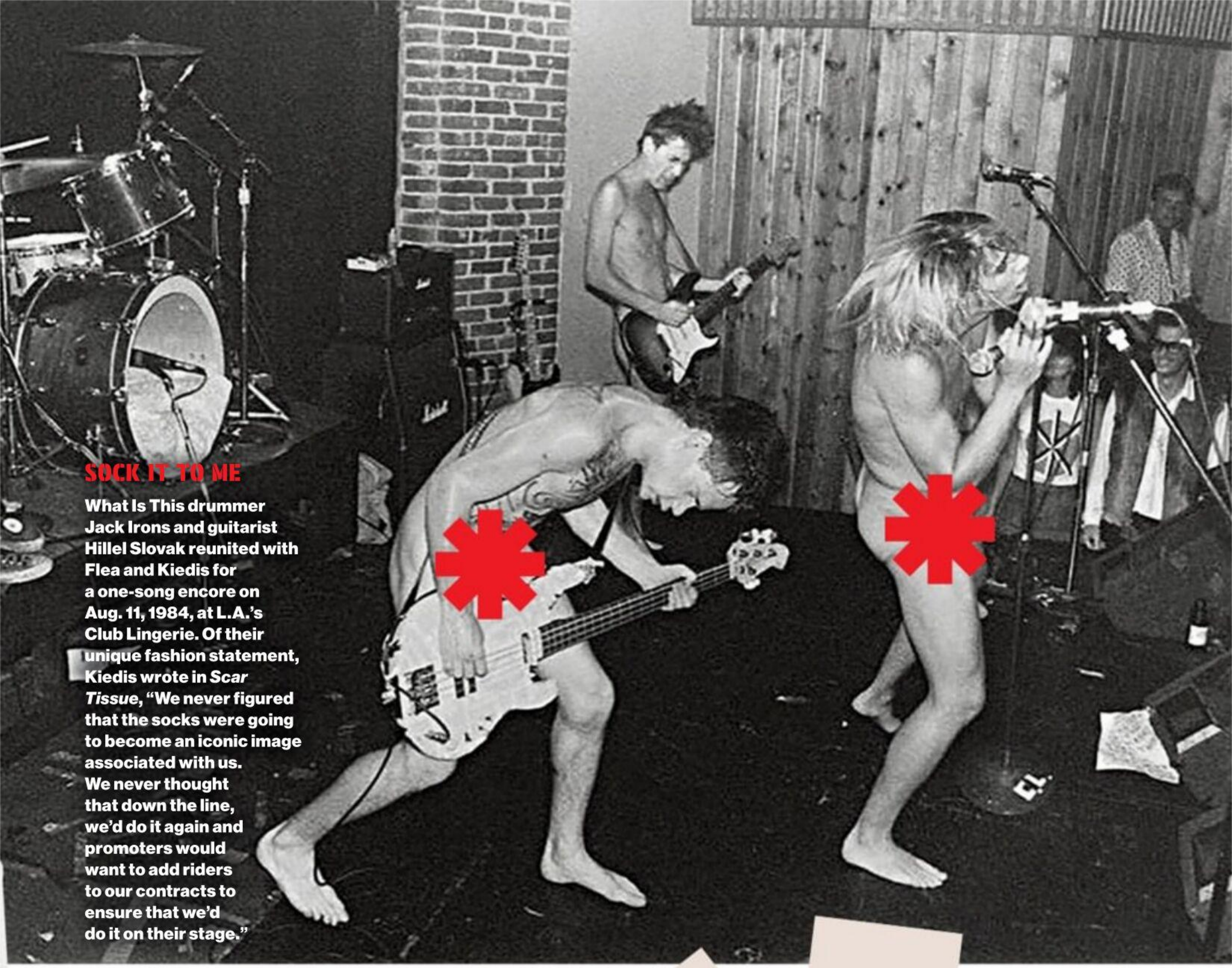
the L.A. club circuit. As a result, Irons and Slovak were recruited into an impromptu quartet they called Tony Flow and the Miraculously Majestic Masters of Mayhem. The goal? Serve as an opening act at a one-time gig. For the occasion, Kiedis busted out one original song, "Out in L.A." "We're all a bunch of brothers livin' in a cool way / Along with 6 million others in this place called L.A. / Step out!" he rapped to a now-signature bass-heavy beat.

When they won the crowd over, the foursome decided to continue under a new name, which perfectly described their spicy recipe of punk, funk and R&B. Boosted by legendary promoter Brendan Mullen, the Red Hot Chili Peppers were soon playing the same Sunset Strip venues they held in awe as teens. Of their early shows, Flea told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2011, "I really looked up to X and the Weirdos and the Germs. They were mythological



EARLY DAZE

Though Kiedis and Flea (top photo, in 1984, and above, in 1983) tried to blend in with other wannabe rockers in the early '80s L.A. punk scene, "we dressed all wrong and we had the wrong haircuts and the wrong shoes and we didn't even dance like all the punks," Kiedis admitted in his 2004 autobiography, *Scar Tissue*.



SOCK IT TO ME

What Is This drummer Jack Irons and guitarist Hillel Slovak reunited with Flea and Kiedis for a one-song encore on Aug. 11, 1984, at L.A.'s Club Lingerie. Of their unique fashion statement, Kiedis wrote in *Scar Tissue*, "We never figured that the socks were going to become an iconic image associated with us. We never thought that down the line, we'd do it again and promoters would want to add riders to our contracts to ensure that we'd do it on their stage."

heroes to me. I felt like it was a great duty and responsibility for me to hold up that end of the bargain, to be a good L.A. band."

Signed to EMI Records in 1983 with a reputation as a wild party band, the Chili Peppers' first three albums — their 1984 self-titled debut, *Freaky Styley* (1985) and *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan* (1987) — failed to make a dent in the charts outside of their hometown. In fact, the group was known less for its music than for playing the occasional gig wearing nothing but tube socks — and not on their feet.

With Slovak and Irons splitting time with What Is This, all four original four members only appeared together on the third album. But just as they were about to enter the studio to record their fourth — what would become their breakthrough release, 1989's *Mother's Milk* — guitarist Slovak died of a drug overdose on June 25, 1988, forcing Kiedis and Flea to shift creative direction. >

> **"When we get naked onstage... it feels so f–ing good, I can't even tell ya. To be stripped down and play your hard rockin' funk tunes naked feels great, it's an incredible rush"**
>
> **— ANTHONY KIEDIS, NME, MAY 1988**

FREE FORM

From a New York show in 1985 (with Flea, left) to a concert in Brussels in 1988 (right), Kiedis enjoyed baring all onstage. "You're young and you're not jaded yet and so the idea of being naked and playing this beautiful music with your best friends and generating so much energy and color and love in a moment of being nude is great," he wrote in *Scar Tissue*.

> **"Sexuality is a very big part of our music because of the funk rhythm. It's a pounding, thriving, driving beat that can't be denied... that makes people feel sexy. And we don't see any need to deny what comes naturally"**
>
> **– ANTHONY KIEDIS, *NME*, MAY 1988**

In an interview conducted for *Musician* magazine at the time of the release, Kiedis was frank about the effect his friend's death had on the recording, explaining that it changed their attitude and focus. "Flea and I were left with each other and decided... we had to bear down, change our lifestyles and look at what was important to us — things like friendship, love, making great music and not getting sidetracked by the more negative influences in life. We tried to use our loss as a bolstering, positive influence, if nothing else, to prove to the world what we were doing was worthy and legitimate."

Kiedis and Flea also picked a pair of brand-new Peppers to complete the lineup, bringing in teenage guitarist John Frusciante, a longtime fan from Chatsworth, California, and Detroit drummer Chad Smith, who would replace a departed Irons. The updated configuration entered Hollywood's famed Ocean Way Recording studios

to lay down the tracks for *Mother's Milk,* with the first singles, a cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" and "Knock Me Down," a tribute to Slovak, going to No. 11 and No. 6, respectively, on the Billboard Top Modern Rock Tracks chart (now called the Alternative Airplay chart). *Mother's Milk* would peak at No. 52 on the Billboard 200 albums chart, eventually going platinum, a harbinger of things to come.

Frusciante's influence on the album and the band was profound, organizing its previous scattershot approach into melodies, harmonies and more complex song structures. The record also captured the group's fabled live intensity for the first time without sacrificing more accessibility. And finally, there was more introspection in the lyrical themes, even in their choice of covering Wonder's 1973 hit. "The song really fits the situation that the band has been in the last few months," Flea noted in an interview with *BAM* magazine after the death of Slovak. "It's about raising and uplifting yourself spiritually."

"Knock Me Down" revealed a vulnerability the Chilis had previously kept well hidden in their socks. "Oddly, I began writing that song before Hillel died," Kiedis told *Musician* magazine. "It's about recognizing we're all human beings and the best we can ever be is just that. And you're never above a problem... including the deadly disease of addiction."

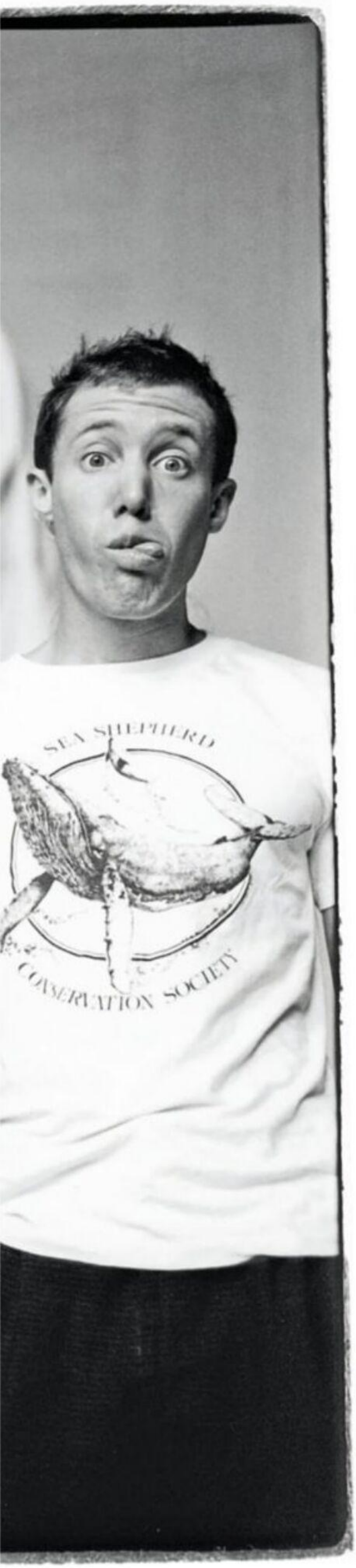
With a subsequent world tour that saw them graduating to arenas, the Red Hot Chili Peppers were about to enter the superstar phase of their careers. "We have a desire to communicate our music to a much larger amount of people than we have in the past," admitted Flea in the same *Musician* interview. "I think we captured more energy than we ever have on a record before. Considering everything that happened, the fact we stayed together was a big bonding factor."

YOUTH GONE WILD

Kiedis told *The Guardian* in 2022 that his time with original band members Flea, Slovak and Irons (here in 1988) "was really nothing other than having fun and being obnoxious, brazen, crass – all of these characteristics that we had as young 20-year-olds."

ROAD WARRIORS

The Chilis took time out of their Uplift Mofo Party Plan Tour to pose at the Lincoln Memorial for photographer Joe Dilworth, who also caught their energy backstage at The Bayou in Washington, D.C., on May 1, 1988.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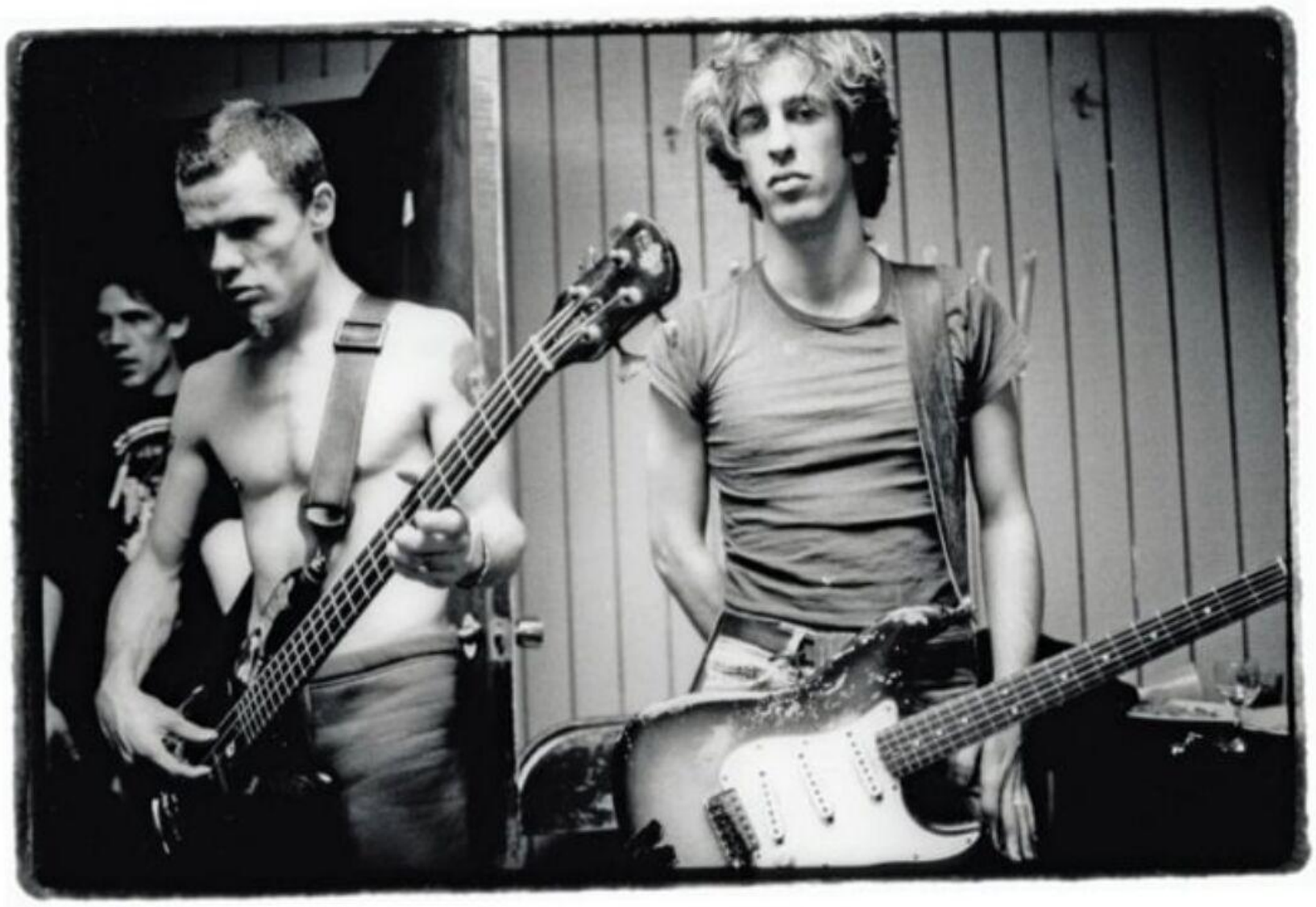


FRESH BLOOD

At the dawn of a new decade, John Frusciante (above, with Kiedis in 1990) recalled the band bringing in Chad Smith (opposite page, second from left, in 1989) as a drummer. He seemed an unlikely prospect, wearing a Metallica shirt and sporting big hair. But as Frusciante would later say, "It's about what someone has on the inside. It's not one's outer presentation."

A MOMENT IN TIME WITH THE BAND

BY ROY TRAKIN

WHEN I ORIGINALLY INTERVIEWED the Red Hot Chili Peppers for the December 1989 issue of *Musician* magazine, I had been living in Los Angeles for four years after moving from New York, and the band's reputation as a live act was already legendary in local circles.

I met co-founders Anthony Kiedis and Flea at a fashionable Italian restaurant on then-trendy Melrose Avenue, with the former's colorfully tattooed torso and the latter's whirlybird beanie cap attracting much attention from bystanders.

The narrative was already in place for the band's fourth album, *Mother's Milk*, the first after the tragic heroin overdose of guitarist Hillel Slovak. It represented a stylistic and commercial milestone for the band with the first singles, a cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" and "Knock Me Down," a sobering homage to Slovak, garnering radio airplay and album sales that climbed into the hundreds of thousands within weeks of release. "This record is more radio-acceptable," Kiedis agreed. "Although it wasn't our intention to change in that direction. We weren't trying to fit in. It was just a natural expression of how we felt. This was a direct link from our hearts, souls and genitals to guitars and vocal cords."

The band's then-newest members — guitarist John Frusciante and drummer Chad Smith — had also energized the band. "It was like an injection of fresh monkey blood into the temple," Kiedis told me, digging into a mozzarella cheese appetizer, while Frusciante added, "I already felt like I was a member of the band spiritually before I ever met them. They were an extension of my attitude toward the world and music, and my philosophy of how I want to live my life."

Anthony also discussed the Chilis' penchant for baring almost all in concert. "We're advocates of freedom in music and to us, being naked when you play expresses the ultimate act of freedom," he stated. "When we feel like getting naked, we will. When we don't, we won't. If you ask us to, we probably won't. but if you beg us not to, we'll be sure to. It's a shame we're more recognized for the socks than our music because our music has a lot more to say."

It was a prescient observation — the calm before the storm — as the Red Hot Chili Peppers were about to ascend platinum heights and never look back. So it was good to catch them at the very cusp of that success, still giddy with anticipation, on the way up.

"With each new record, we get closer to the sounds and intensity we want," observed Kiedis. "Music like Parliament-Funkadelic, Miles Davis, Defunkt and Grandmaster Flash excited us. From punk came the raw animal magnetism we also incorporated.

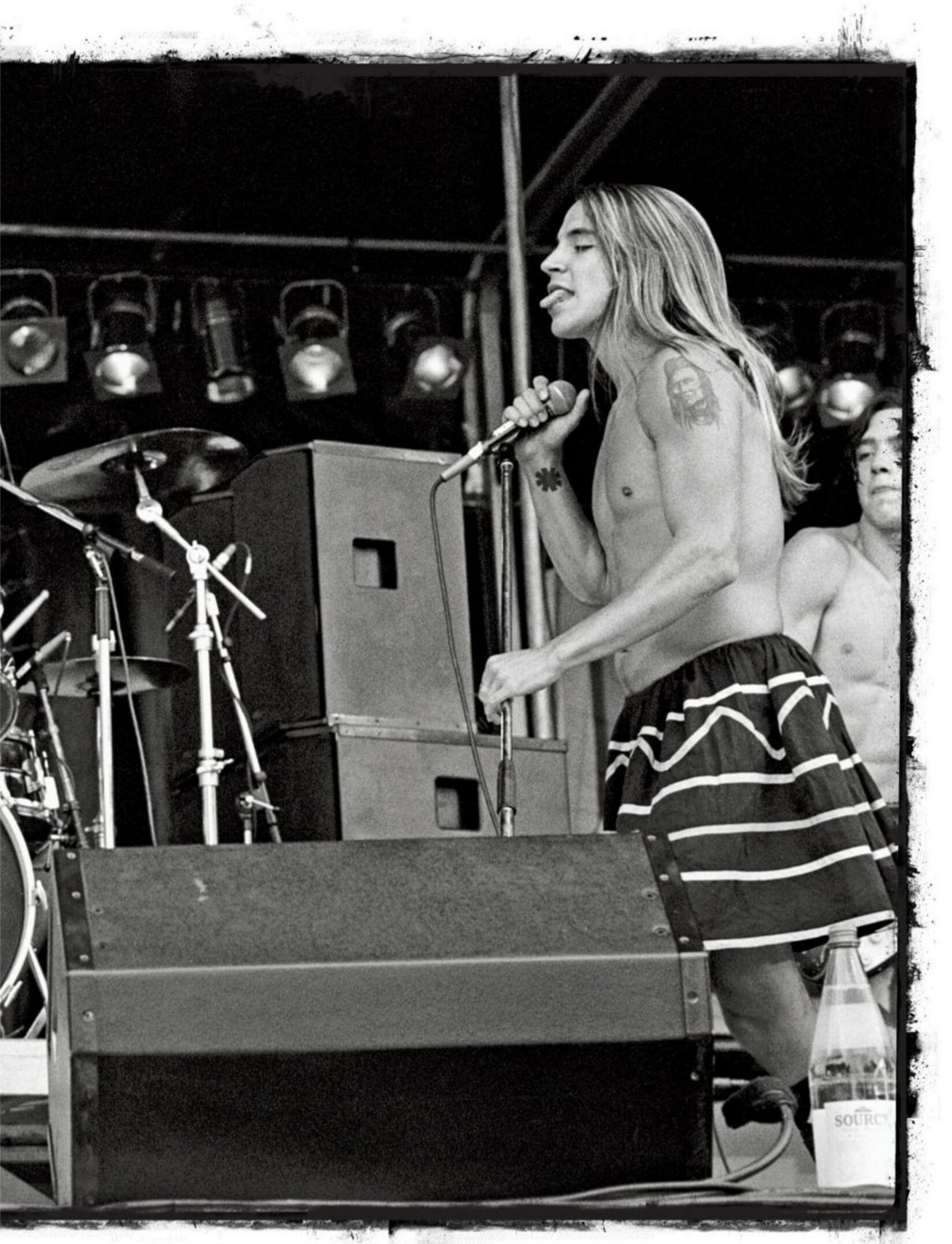
"Growing up in Hollywood gives you a lot of tension, aggression and frustration because there's so much sensory input... the people, the traffic, the lights, the movies, the palm trees, the ocean, the breeze, the hills — the police helicopters landing on your eyeballs. They're all there barking down your face day and night. What can you do but regurgitate it in your music?"

BAND OF BROTHERS

The friendship between Kiedis and Flea (here in August 1989) has held the Chilis together. Of their intense bond, Flea wrote in *Acid for the Children*, "The combination of sincerity, hypocrisy, and true devotion to beauty that I see in him — and he sees in me — is wild. I've been a complete a—hole to him a million times, and I love him as much as anyone on this earth."

FACING THE MUSIC

Flea, Smith and Kiedis sported some of the band's milder expressions in this concert image from Amsterdam on Aug. 26, 1989.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CAUGHT UNDER TOE

Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro jumped into the deep end with the band at the Sunset Marquis in West Hollywood, California, on Aug. 18, 1995, less than a month before the release of the Chilis' *One Hot Minute*.

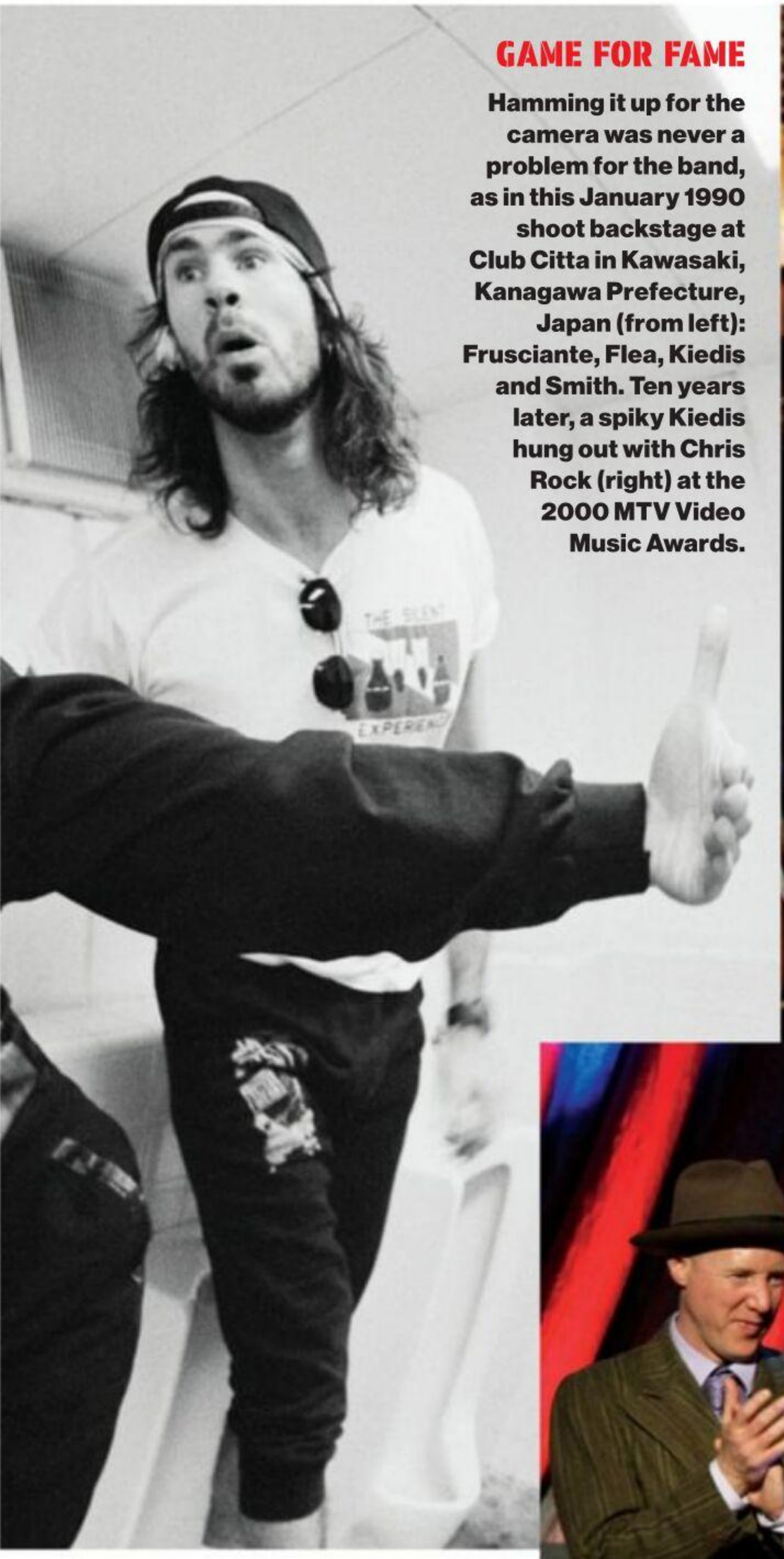
MAINSTREAM MAYHEM

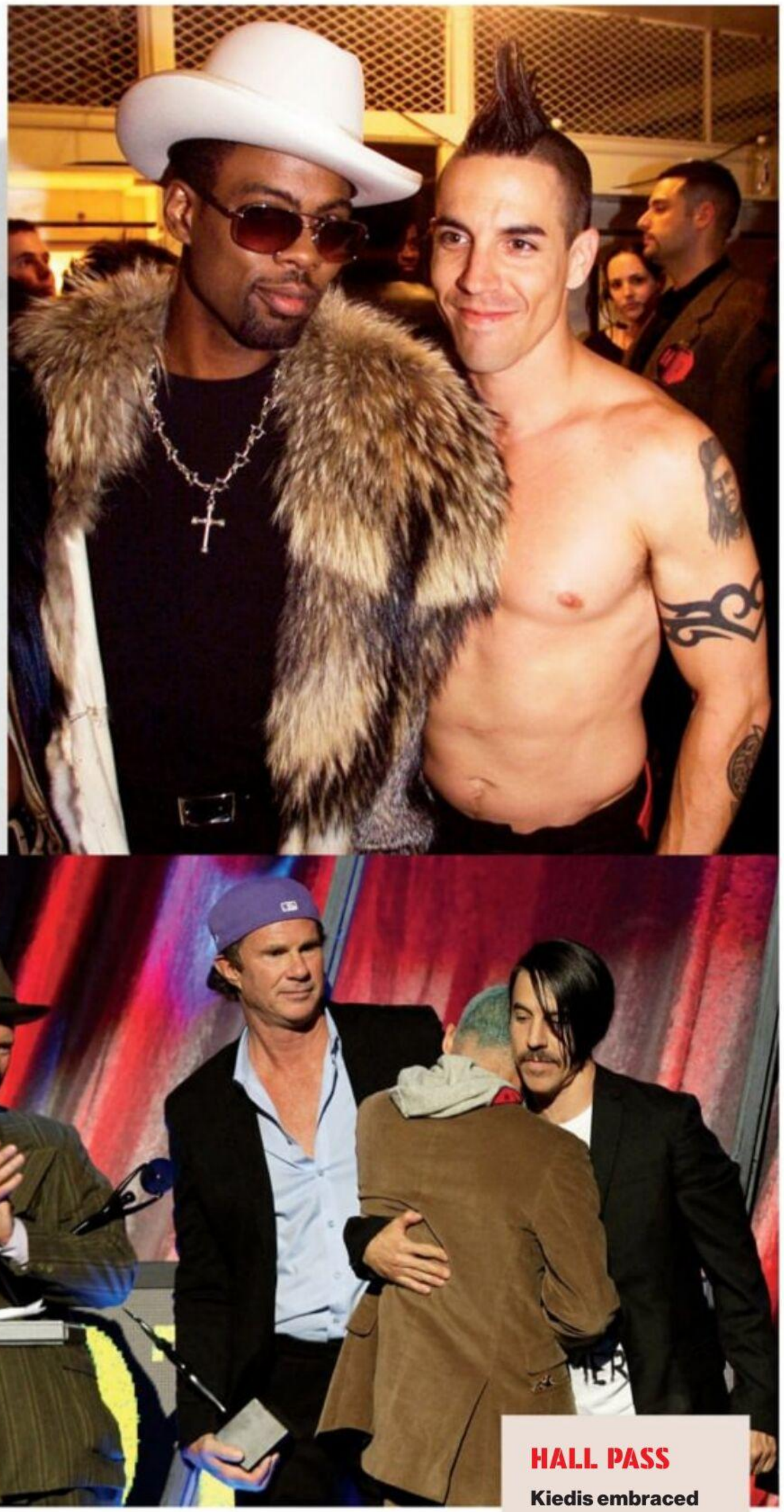
BY ANDREW LAWRENCE

Wanting attention and handling it are two different things. Even as the Chilis became more acclaimed and popular, each member had to fight different demons

THE BEASTIE BOYS, GUNS N' ROSES and 15 inductees of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame 2012 class had been enshrined into the Cleveland pantheon before the Red Hot Chili Peppers came on to close a show that had gone on for nearly five hours. But the onlookers who stuck around for the end of the ceremony saw their steadfastness rewarded when the band was introduced by South Carolina-born, Brooklyn-raised Chris Rock — perhaps not the first the guy you'd suspect to be down for some L.A. funk-rock.

Recalling his first time seeing the group, the comedian confessed he "couldn't understand a word they said," and what's more, "They had socks on their dicks."





GAME FOR FAME

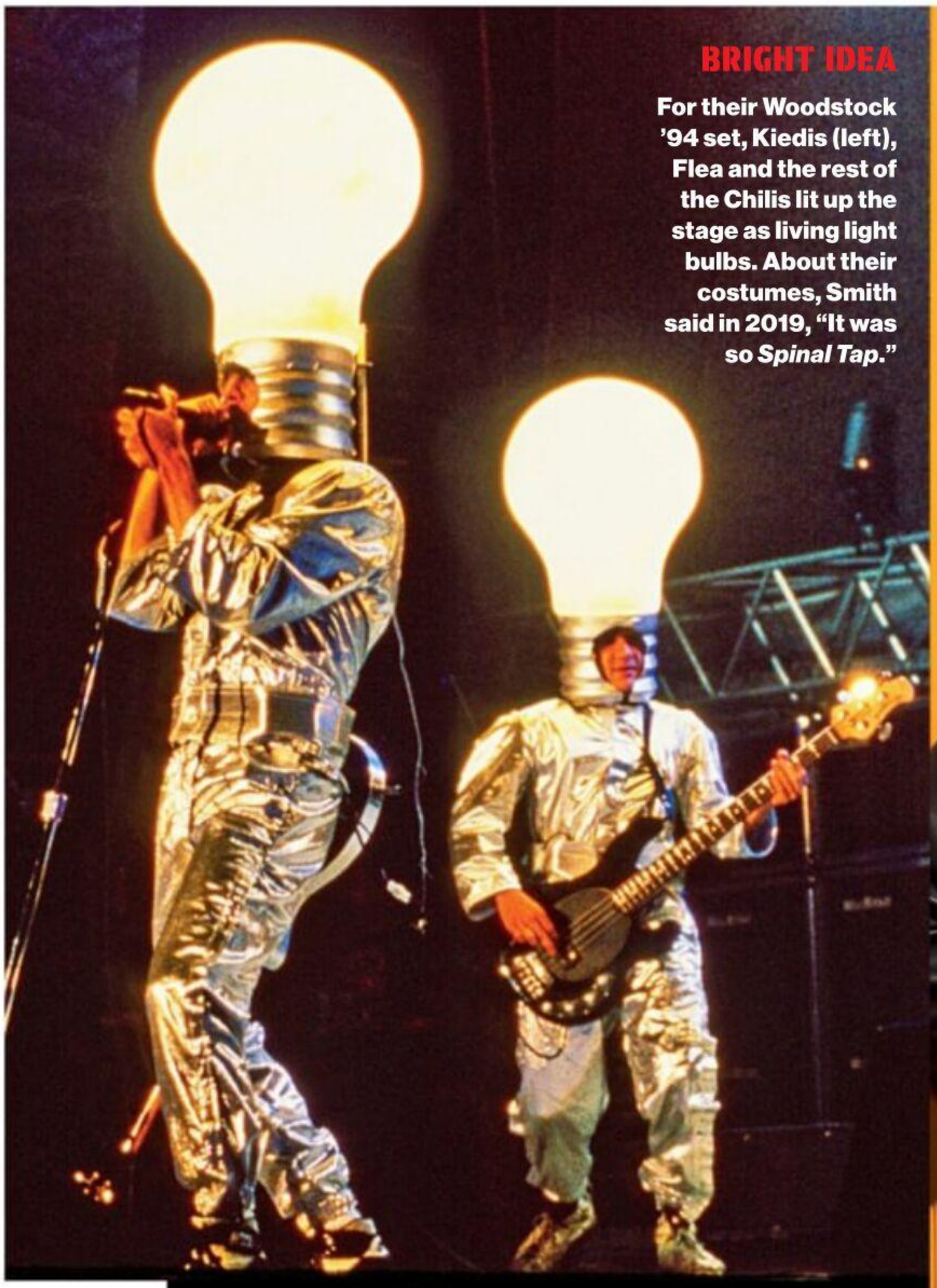
Hamming it up for the camera was never a problem for the band, as in this January 1990 shoot backstage at Club Citta in Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan (from left): Frusciante, Flea, Kiedis and Smith. Ten years later, a spiky Kiedis hung out with Chris Rock (right) at the 2000 MTV Video Music Awards.

And yet there was something in their sound that was so resonant and relatable. "If George Clinton and Brian Wilson had a kid, he'd be ugly — but he'd be Red Hot Chili Peppers," Rock stated.

After that opener, the band reemerged to do what it does best: dominate the music scene. And unlike some of their fellow inductees, the Chili Peppers' best days weren't that far in the rearview. Their Hall of Fame induction had come just over two decades since drummer Chad Smith and guitarist John Frusciante (who did not attend the ceremony) came aboard for the fourth studio album, *Mother's Milk*, a certified gold debut that announced the group as coveted property. With that as leverage, the band walked away from incumbent label EMI, triggered a major-label bidding war that ended with them signing with Warner Bros. Records and reuniting them with uber-producer

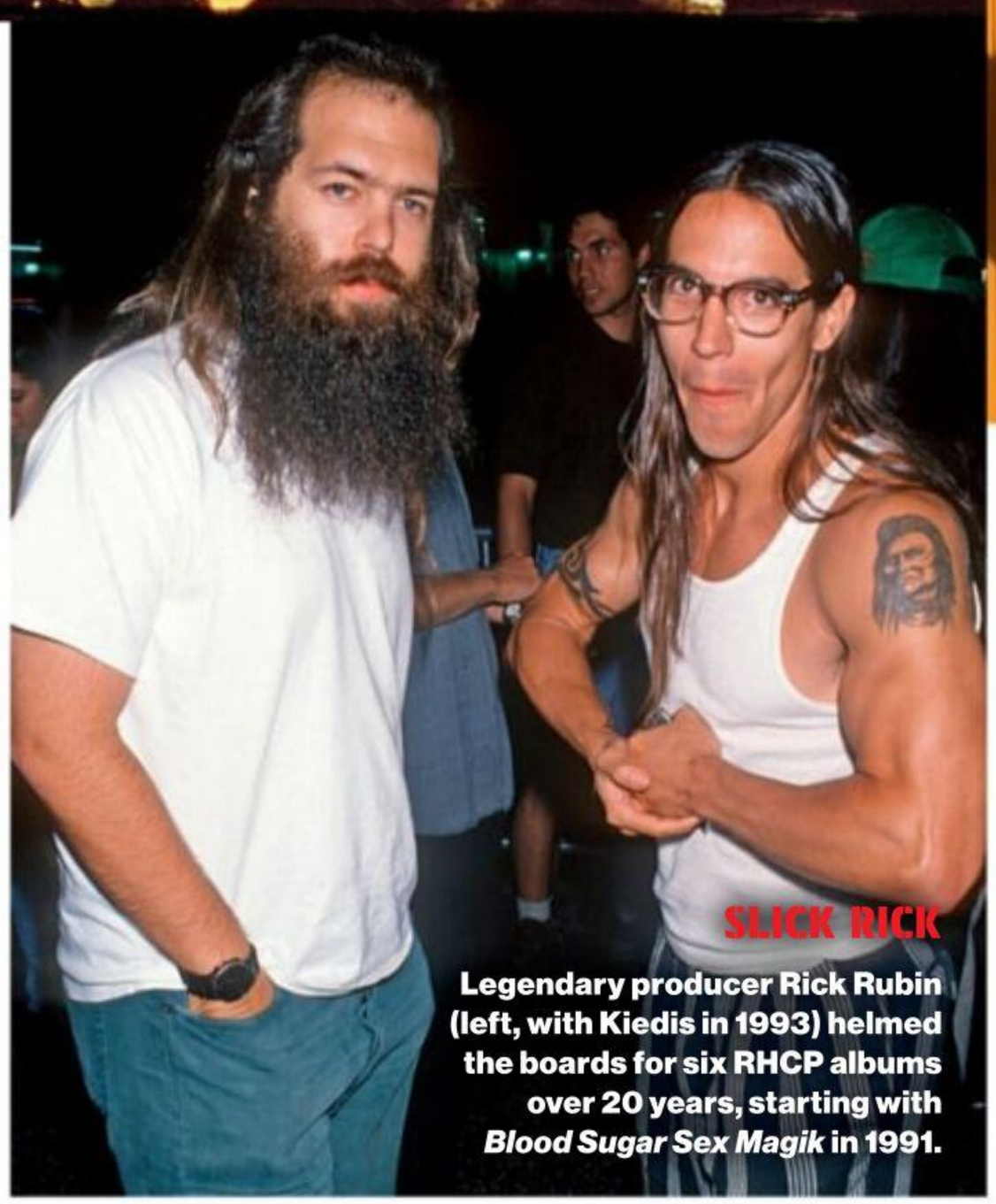
HALL PASS

Kiedis embraced an emotional Flea as drummers Irons (left) and Smith looked on, when the Chilis were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland on April 14, 2012.



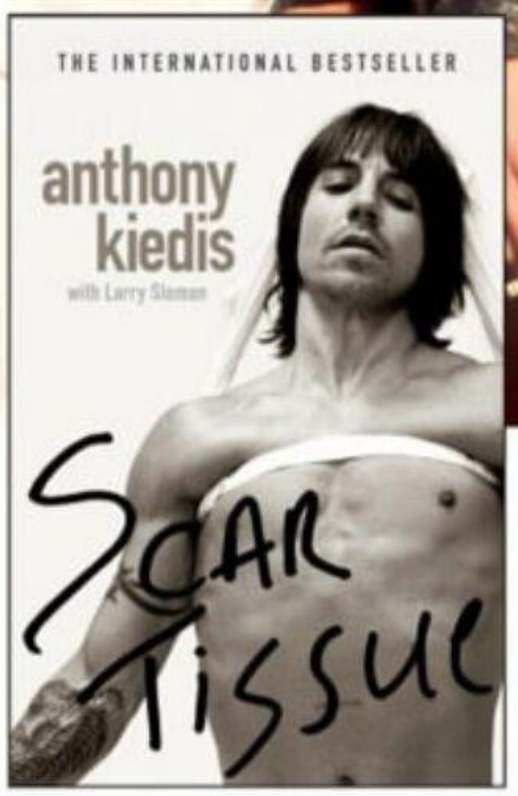
BRIGHT IDEA

For their Woodstock '94 set, Kiedis (left), Flea and the rest of the Chilis lit up the stage as living light bulbs. About their costumes, Smith said in 2019, "It was so *Spinal Tap*."



SLICK RICK

Legendary producer Rick Rubin (left, with Kiedis in 1993) helmed the boards for six RHCP albums over 20 years, starting with *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* in 1991.



Rick Rubin — who had initially passed on working with the band because of their penchant for drugs and other trouble.

In the night's most effusive speech, bassist Flea paid tribute to founding guitarist Hillel Slovak, who died of a heroin overdose at age 26. ("I never would've started playing bass unless he asked me to," Flea said.) But that was hardly the end of the band making headlines for the wrong reasons.

GOING DUTCH

Smith, Frusciante, Kiedis and Flea got their leathers on for the Pinkpop Festival in Landgraaf, Netherlands, on June 4, 1990.

Frusciante's own heroin addiction turned him irascible and self-sabotaging; famously, frontman Anthony Kiedis accused him of tanking a 1992 *Saturday Night Live* appearance to promote the band's fifth album — *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, a blockbuster success — with a purposefully off-key performance of "Under the Bridge." Overwhelmed by the Chili Peppers' soaring popularity, Frusciante quit the group, eventually opening up a slot for Dave Navarro — who appeared on the sixth album, *One Hot Minute*, which hewed closer to Navarro's heavy metal roots. >

> ***"I wasn't one of those kids who grew up dreaming of gold records... Everywhere we showed up, there were people, and they cared, and we rocked them out, and we gave it everything"***
>
> **— ANTHONY KIEDIS, IN HIS 2004 MEMOIR, *SCAR TISSUE***

In 1990, *The Washington Post* reported that Kiedis had been convicted of sexual battery and indecent exposure "resulting from a backstage incident the year before." In his 2004 autobiography, *Scar Tissue*, Kiedis admitted to having sex with a variety of underaged girls. At MTV's 1990 Spring Break, Smith and Flea were charged with assault after plucking a female audience member from the crowd, pulling down her bathing suit and simulating a sex act with her. During that same time, a female executive at Epic Records alleged that she had been sexually harassed by two unnamed members of the band.

Whereas today such behavior might trigger a public outcry for the band's cancellation, back then, the untoward conduct was considered of a piece with their rock star brand — and the band members haven't been pressed to show much remorse for their past deportment, either. The warning labels that adorned albums like *By the Way* and *Stadium Arcadium* simply gave the band a street cred with consumers to match their rivals on the hip-hop charts. Meanwhile, the Chili Peppers' knack for grabbing attention was amplified in music videos that were as apt to push the bounds of decency as channel German Expressionism and other hardcore art movements.

The average band doesn't survive this level of drama. The Chilis went through seven guitarists before getting Frusciante back in time to record *Californication* — far and away their most commercially successful and critically acclaimed album. Their Hall of Fame induction set didn't include any songs from that album (likely out of respect for the absent Frusciante), but it did see Flea and Kiedis peel off their formalwear to deliver their trademark shirtless performance.

Former drummers Jack Irons and Cliff Martinez were also part of the show, a testament to the band's singular chemistry, as volatile as it is voluminous, with seemingly no clear finish line in sight. "How can we stop and take an award when we're just halfway there?" Kiedis told the Associated Press before the induction ceremony. "But it is nice to be together with people that we spent some incredible years along the way writing songs and playing shows in little theaters and sweaty little transvestite clubs and having the time of our lives."

MUSICAL CHAIRS

While the Chilis began 1990 with Frusciante (above, right), he would leave the band in 1992, overwhelmed by the success of 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. In his stead came Navarro (right, with Kiedis), who brought a hard rock edge. Alas, their working styles did not mesh and the Jane's Addiction guitarist was out in 1998. As he told rock journalist Eddie Trunk in 2017, "[I understand] the way that Chili Peppers fans couldn't get into the band when I was in the band. It's not the Chili Peppers to them."

TIGHT KNIT

More clothes, more tats, more music: the Chilis were ready to rumble, or at least promote *Unlimited Love*, in 2022. It was their first studio album with Frusciante (second from left) since *Stadium Arcadium* in 2006.

SOULS TO

COVER WORTHY

Another take from this Mark Seliger shoot made the June 25 cover of *Rolling Stone* in 1992.

SQUEEZE

BY NICHOLAS WHITE

Every musician who joined the band seasoned each album, song or tour with his own secret spice

A LEG UP

In his memoir *Scar Tissue*, Kiedis (here in February 1988 at a show in Netherlands) said that the band's very bare stage presence began with a strip club gig. "We had already been playing shirtless, and we realized the power and beauty of nudity onstage," he wrote. He has kept up the minimal clothing style ever since, as seen during a 30th anniversary party for the Ramones at the Avalon in Hollywood, California, on Sept. 12, 2004 (opposite page).

ANTHONY KIEDIS

DOB
NOV. 1, 1962

BIRTHPLACE
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

INSTRUMENT
VOCALS

TENURE
1982 — CURRENT

"Making music with my band is the most sacred thing I have going, creating sounds with my best friends," Kiedis said after the release of Red Hot Chili Peppers' 1991 classic *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. The expressive singer has been the face of RHCP since Day 1, a bravado presence with a penchant for bending his arms and performing shirtless. The whole time, Kiedis' best friend and bandmate, Flea, has been by his side. "We both came out of broken homes, slightly atypical homes," Kiedis said on *60 Minutes* in 2023. "Really, we wanted to get into trouble. How much trouble can we get into without going to jail." Flea explained of meeting Kiedis that "[he was] someone I could talk to and get heard by." Battling heroin addiction through his pre-*Californication* career, Kiedis has maintained his sobriety for years. "I got to the point where I could not turn off the noise with drugs and alcohol," Kiedis said in 2022.

Really, we wanted to get into trouble. How much trouble can we get into without going to jail"

— ANTHONY KIEDIS, *60 MINUTES*, 2023

FLEA

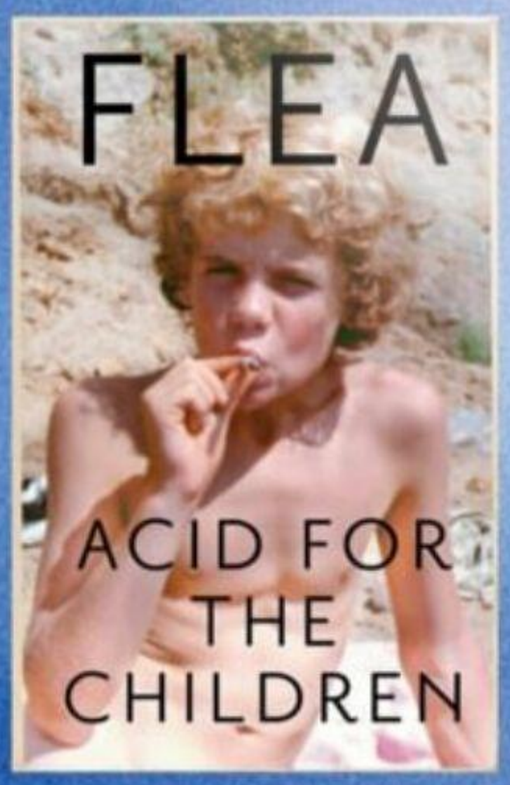
DOB
OCT. 16, 1962

BIRTHPLACE
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

INSTRUMENT
BASS GUITAR, VOCALS

TENURE
1982 — CURRENT

Flea (real name: Michael Balzary) is the living embodiment of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' funk, rock and bass-heavy style. He helped form the band from meeting Kiedis, Hillel Slovak and Jack Irons at Fairfax High in West Hollywood. "For me, music is the voice of God," Flea told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2023. No less an impresario than Primus' Les Claypool said Flea was a game changer in helping bassists take center stage: "He's more of a contemporary, but when Flea came along, he busted open a huge window for all of us," he told musician-focused site MusicRadar in 2015. His comfort with public nudity hasn't hurt either, playing festivals like Woodstock '99 *au naturel* and, alongside his bandmates, often wearing only a sock on his genitals. "For us, it was just a silly joke," Flea said in 2011. Away from the stage, he moonlights as an actor, turning in indelible performances in films such as *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) and *Queen & Slim* (2019).



"The world needs weirdos to break the mold"

— FLEA, IN HIS 2019 MEMOIR, *ACID FOR THE CHILDREN*

FEEL THE FORCE

"I'm not religious in any way, but I kind of believe in God," Flea (here in Brussels in 1995) told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2023. "And I try to live a life that honors my idea of what God is — like a divine energy."

CHAD SMITH

ON THE BEAT

Smith may be having fun at Coachella in 2013, but at least he has his shirt on. Telling *Rolling Stone* that the band planned to go "balls out" for their first U.S. stadium tour in 2022, he added, "We'll literally have our balls out. [*Laughs.*] No one wants to see that! Old balls!"

I wanted to be

in the band badly”

— CHAD SMITH

DOB
OCT. 25, 1961

BIRTHPLACE
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

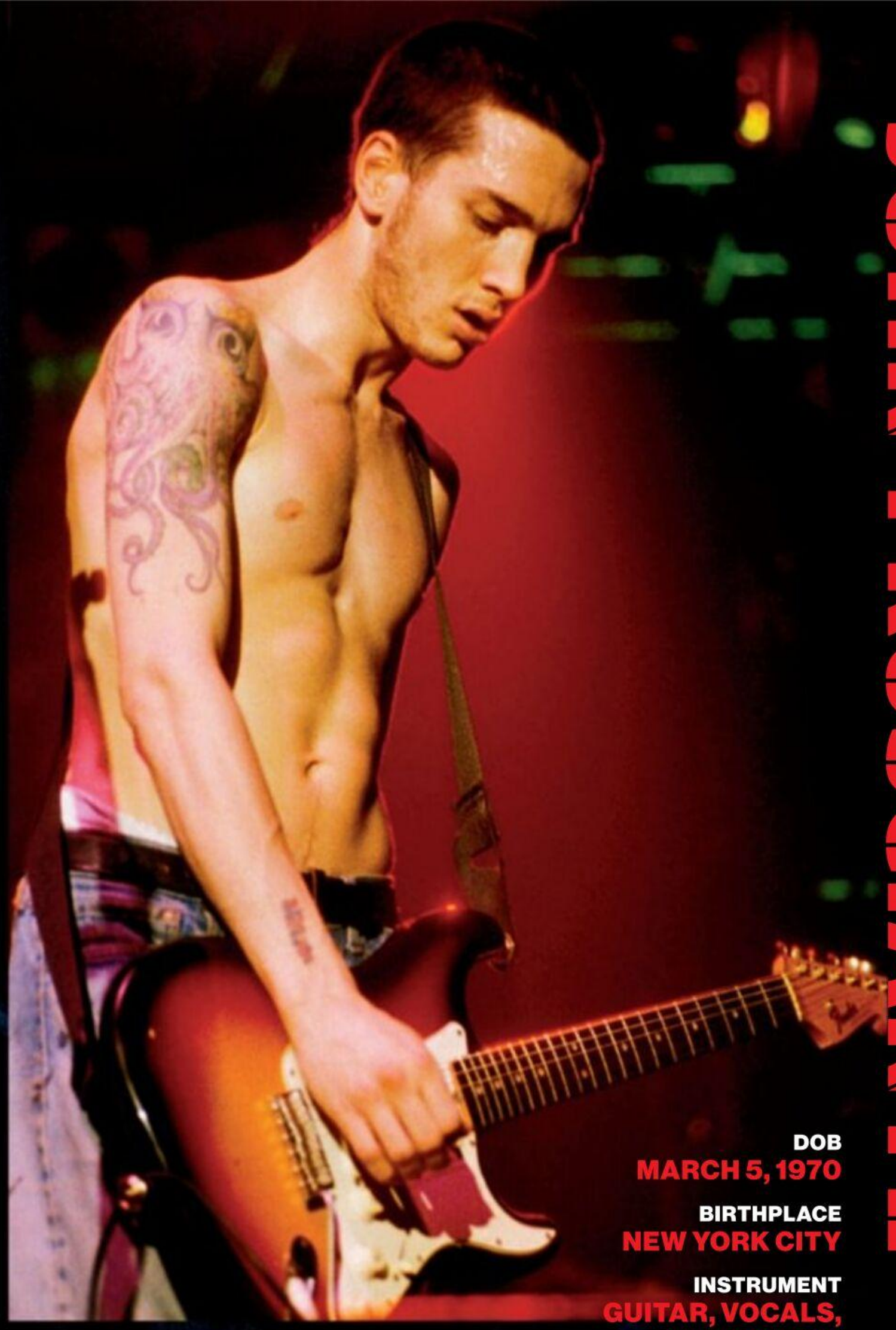
INSTRUMENT
DRUMS

TENURE
1988 — CURRENT

The (relatively) quiet rock of the Chilis, Smith picked up the sticks before their fourth album, *Mother’s Milk*, and hasn’t put them down since. Smith almost didn’t look the part during his band audition when he came in with a cut-off Metallica T-shirt, shorts and bandana. “I remember Anthony just running around the room laughing,” Smith said in 2021. After hearing Flea’s out-there bass, Smith later confessed, “I wanted to be in the band badly,” and his efforts in a high-energy cover of Jimi Hendrix’s “Fire” helped him get the job. Flea’s relationship with Smith years later remains through playing music, not outside-of-work socializing. “I can look at him and be like, ‘Here we go, motherf–er,’” Flea told Rick Rubin on the *Broken Record* podcast in 2022. “That is a beautiful conversation that Chad and I share, and I’m so grateful for that.” As Kiedis said during a concert in 2023, “Chad Smith, I love you.” Smith is active with charity work and playing with other bands including rockers Chickenfoot, which includes his doppelgänger, Will Ferrell.

“
You should use it
[the guitar] like a paintbrush,
not a machine”
— JOHN FRUSCIANTE,
GUITAR PLAYER, 1991

JOHN FRUSCIANTE



DOB
MARCH 5, 1970

BIRTHPLACE
NEW YORK CITY

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR, VOCALS, KEYBOARDS

TENURE
1988 — 1992,
1998 — 2009,
2019 — CURRENT

TOO FAST TOO SOON

Surrounded by excess as a 20-something in the early '90s, Frusciante (right, in February 1992) left the Chilis for his first time. Six years later in 1998, when the band asked him to come back, a clean-living Frusciante reportedly replied, "Nothing would make me happier in the world." He's still there, exciting the crowd at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London on July 21, 2023 (left).

Frusciante had enormous shoes to fill after Slovak's death, which left a big punk-funk attitude hole in the band. A guitar pro and technical enthusiast, he had an early feel for the group's bubbling energy, attending RHCP shows as a teenager. "John is such a pure artist," Flea said in 2000. "He just lives for the process of making music." Besides playing on the group's biggest albums — *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, *Mother's Milk*, *Californication* and *By the Way* — Frusciante is known for his long breaks from the band. As such, Frusciante has retained tones of humility: "In the Chili Peppers, I'm a part of that world in a pretty big world, and that's the way it is." Smith joked in 2022 of Frusciante and RHCP, "We're the Liz [Taylor] and Richard [Burton] of rock 'n' roll," referencing the famous couple who married and divorced twice. "I think we've got more to say together, and I think John knows that."

THE NEW KIDS

Before hitting the stage at their sold-out gig in New York's the Ritz on Dec. 12, 1986, original Chilis Irons, Slovak, Flea and Kiedis took this photo together. Of that time in the band, Irons told *Rolling Stone* in May 2022, "It wasn't hard to be anti everything that became popular in the ['80s]. We were also young and full of spunk and energy."

JACK IRONS

DOB
JULY 18, 1962

BIRTHPLACE
LOS ANGELES

INSTRUMENT
DRUMS

TENURE
1982, 1986 — 1988

Irons, Slovak, Kiedis and Flea were the original Chilis, recording the demo that helped get the band their first record deal with EMI America. Along with Slovak, Irons left RHCP before recording their debut album after his side project also signed a record deal. Irons returned for the third album, *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan*, then abruptly quit the band when Slovak died. Irons was also Pearl Jam's drummer from 1994 to 1998. Of the Chilis, Irons said in 2022, "I've always truly loved my friends, and I treated them as friends and I talk to them as friends."

HILLEL SLOVAK

APRIL 13, 1962–
JUNE 25, 1988

BIRTHPLACE
HAIFA, ISRAEL

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR, VOCALS, SITAR

TENURE
1982, 1985 — 1988

A hard-rocking guitarist with plenty of personality, Slovak was a major part of the band's early distinctive sound, one that built RHCP into a global force. "Were it not for him, I would never had begun to play the bass," Flea said. Slovak recorded the band's first demo but, like Irons, left before he could record the first album, *The Red Hot Chili Peppers*. Kiedis said about Slovak rejoining the Chilis two years later, "I'd give my firstborn son to get him back in the band." Tragically, Slovak succumbed to a heroin addiction after the band finished its Uplift Mofo Party Plan Tour. Said Flea: "Hillel is always with me, and my love for him only grows stronger with time."

A DREAM CUT SHORT

Irons and Slovak (right, holding the mic with Kiedis) were longtime friends and bandmates in their own group, What Is This, prior to committing to the Chilis. But after Slovak's death in June 1988, Irons had to step away. "Yeah, I was really blown up," Irons told *Rolling Stone* in 2022, adding later in the interview, "I knew I wasn't going to do music for a long time. That's why I left. Ultimately, I just couldn't see myself doing it. I just wasn't... I couldn't."

JACK SHERMAN

A BRIEF SHINING LIGHT

"God bless Jack," Kiedis wrote in *Scar Tissue* of Sherman (here in 1984). "He did keep the band afloat for a year, and if he hadn't, the years to follow probably wouldn't have."

"I stuck to my guns in trying to be my own man as a musician and guitarist in the band"

– JACK SHERMAN, 2002

JAN. 18, 1956–AUG. 18, 2020

BIRTHPLACE
MIAMI

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR

TENURE
1983 – 1985

Sherman played guitar on the Chilis' first album and co-wrote songs on the second album, *Freaky Styley*, though he was with the band for only 14 months. When Sherman died in 2020, Flea posted a bittersweet memorial online: "Our relationship was complicated. We stopped playing together in 1985, and things were often fraught in the rare times we communicated since.... This morning in pondering him, a wave of appreciation washed over me, which is really the only truth of the matter."

CLIFF MARTINEZ

DOB
FEB. 5, 1954

BIRTHPLACE
NEW YORK CITY

INSTRUMENTS
DRUMS, PIANO, KEYBOARDS, SYNTHESIZER, CRISTAL BASCHET

TENURE
1983 – 1986

Martinez played drums on the Chilis' first two albums before embarking on a successful career scoring movies and TV shows including *The Knick*, *Game Night* and *Traffic*. He said of his time in the band, "For me, it was a tough thing to fit in socially. We could never come to an agreement on our look... basic issues of band image."

Martinez (right, in 1988) told *Vanity Fair* in 2016 he left the band at the age of 32 not seeing a future in near naked drumming, but "I guess they've proven me wrong."

DEWAYNE "BLACKBYRD" MCKNIGHT

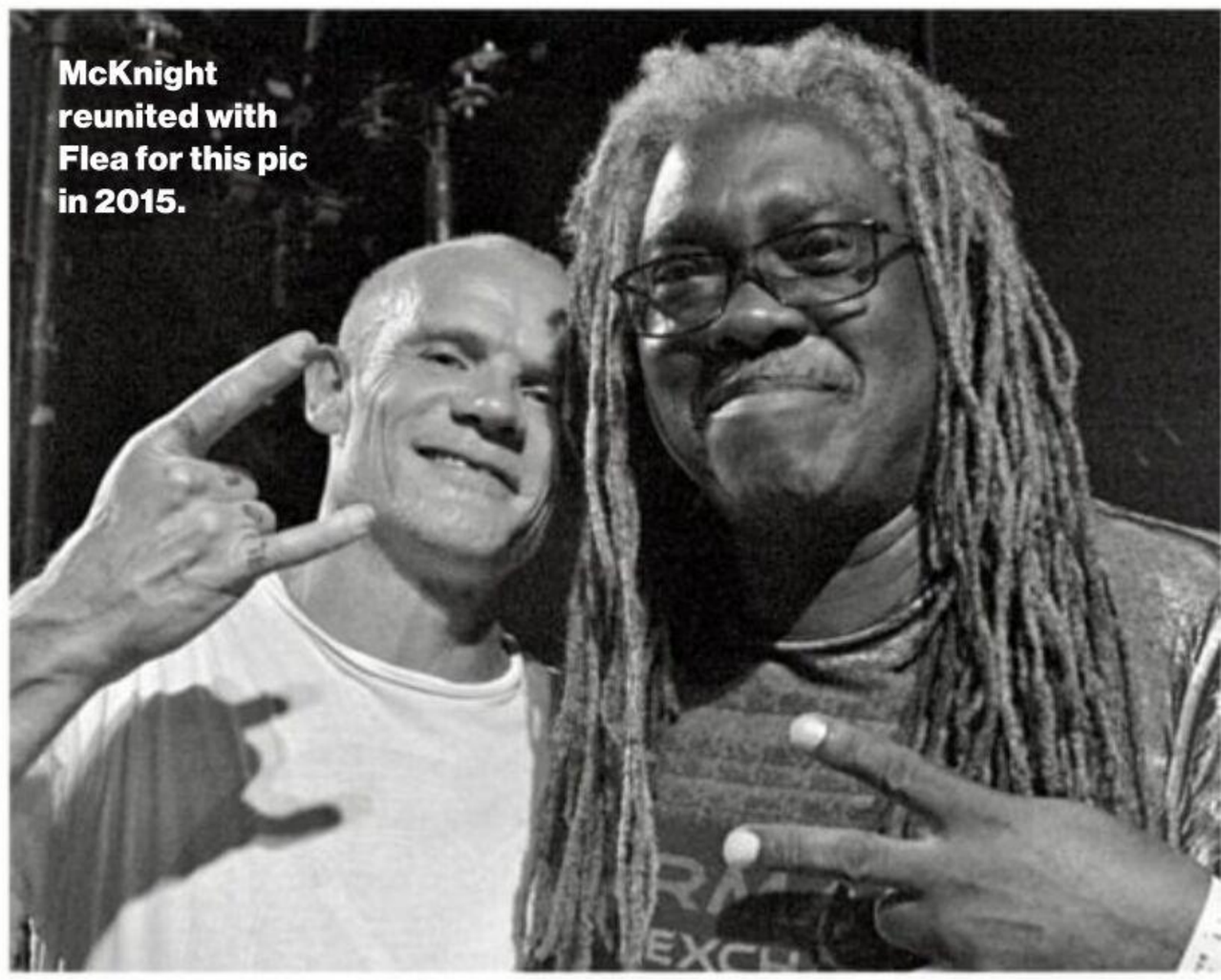
DOB
APRIL 17, 1954

BIRTHPLACE
LOS ANGELES

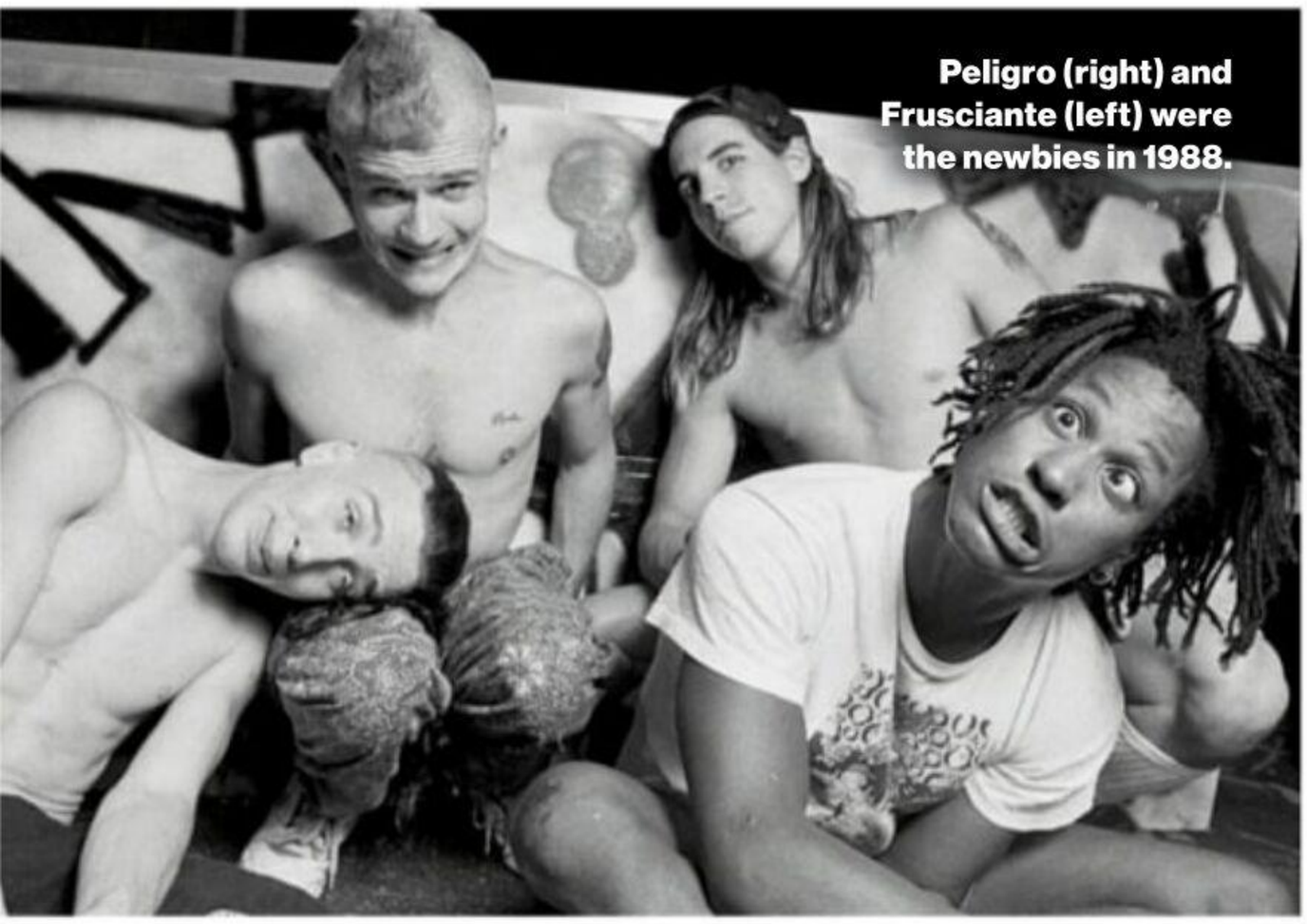
INSTRUMENT
GUITAR

TENURE
1988

A 30-year member of George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic, McKnight stepped in for several months after Slovak's passing and before Frusciante's introduction. "We did three or four shows, and after those shows, I got the news that I wouldn't be in the band," McKnight said in 2022. "See, I never knew what would happen next, and it wasn't easy for me, to say the least."



McKnight reunited with Flea for this pic in 2015.



Peligro (right) and Frusciante (left) were the newbies in 1988.

D.H. PELIGRO

JULY 9, 1959–
OCT. 28, 2022

BIRTHPLACE
ST. LOUIS

INSTRUMENT:
DRUMS

TENURE
1988

Best known as the longtime drummer of Dead Kennedys, Peligro was friends with Flea before his brief stay with the Chilis. "Flea came up and said, 'Dude, you should move to L.A.! You can get lots of work down there!'" Peligro recalled in 2004. As with Sherman's passing, Flea paid tribute online to Peligro in 2022: "You are the truest rocker and a crucial part of RHCP history."

HEAVY ROTATION

Navarro (right, onstage with Kiedis in 1995) joined an ever-growing fraternity of guitarists who had played for the Chilis when he became No. 7 in 1993, contributing to the 1995 album *One Hot Minute*.

DAVE NAVARRO

“I still love those guys to death, and being a Chili Pepper was one of the best experiences of my life”

– DAVE NAVARRO

DOB
JUNE 7, 1967

BIRTHPLACE
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR

TENURE
1993 — 1998

After blazing trails with alternative rock band Jane’s Addiction, Navarro stepped into the Chili Peppers’ white-hot 1990s era, though his new creative output was limited to the *One Hot Minute* album and several soundtrack contributions. Some RHCP fans said Navarro’s time was underrated, and the band has rarely played tracks from that period live since the ’90s. “Basically, Dave left the band,” Flea said in 1999. “We did not fire him. He did not quit. It was like, this is not working.” Kiedis added, “The difference between Dave and the band grew larger and larger, and Flea’s lack of fulfillment grew bigger and bigger until something had to break.” Navarro and Sherman may have been two alums absent from the band’s 2012 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction, but Navarro and Kiedis reunited in December 2021 for a one-off charity performance in Hollywood. “I still love those guys to death, and being a Chili Pepper was one of the best experiences of my life,” Navarro, a longtime host of reality competition series *Ink Master*, said in 1998.

JESSE TOBIAS

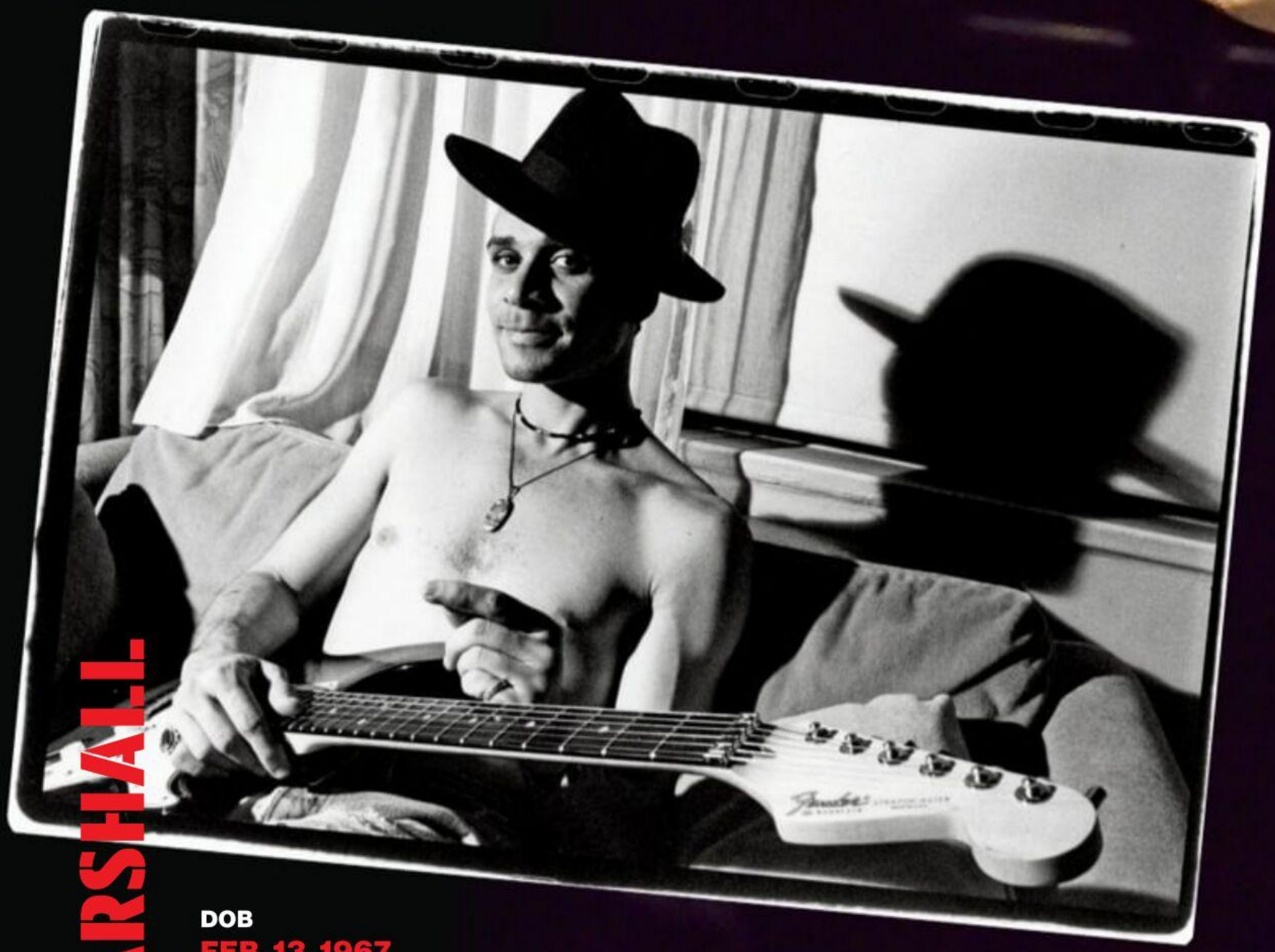
DOB
APRIL 1, 1972

BIRTHPLACE
AUSTIN, TEXAS

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR

TENURE
1993

At one month, Jesse Tobias' tenure is the shortest in RHCP history. Recruited as the guitarist between Frusciante's first departure and Navarro's arrival, Tobias went on to be Morrissey's guitarist and co-songwriter. He also played on Alanis Morissette's 1995 Jagged Little Tour.



ARIK MARSHALL

DOB
FEB. 13, 1967

BIRTHPLACE
LOS ANGELES

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR

TENURE
1992 – 1993

A professional musician, Marshall hopped onto the mega-selling *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* world tour midway after Frusciante quit the band. He handled the ax for that tour, Lollapalooza and other gigs before Tobias replaced him. "Everyone can enjoy that," Marshall deadpanned on *The Simpsons* when Krusty the Clown suggested that the band make the racy lyrics to "Give It Away" more family-friendly.

GOOD TIMING

By being an active Chili in the 2010s, Klinghoffer (right, performing at Bonnaroo in 2017) was the third guitarist, along with Slovak and Frusciante, to be inducted with the band in the Rock Hall.

JOSH KLINGHOFFER

DOB
OCT. 3, 1979

BIRTHPLACE
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

INSTRUMENT
GUITAR, VOCALS, DRUMS, KEYBOARDS

TENURE
2009 — 2019

"Josh is a beautiful musician who we respect and love," the Chilis announced in 2019 after Klinghoffer finished his decade-long stint with the band. Danger Mouse, with whom Klinghoffer toured as Gnarls Barkley, was brought in to produce 2016's *The Getaway*, helping to define the sound of the Klinghoffer era. Despite his longevity, Klinghoffer told *Guitar World* magazine in 2022 that he is more comfortable since leaving the band: "I did a perfect 10 years with them, but for as much as I love those guys and loved playing with them, it was also enormously stifling creatively."

> *"I did a perfect 10 years with them"*
>
> **– JOSH KLINGHOFFER**

DRESSED TO DO PRESS

Flea, Kiedis, Frusciante and Smith took this portrait to promote the 2007 MTV Australia Video Music Awards, at which they took Best Group honors. (Album of the Year, however, would go to Evanescence for *The Open Door*.)

THE OL' RAZZLE DAZZLE

Flea played to the Day 3 crowd at The Meadows Music & Arts Festival in New York on Sept. 17, 2017.

ROAD TRIPPIN'

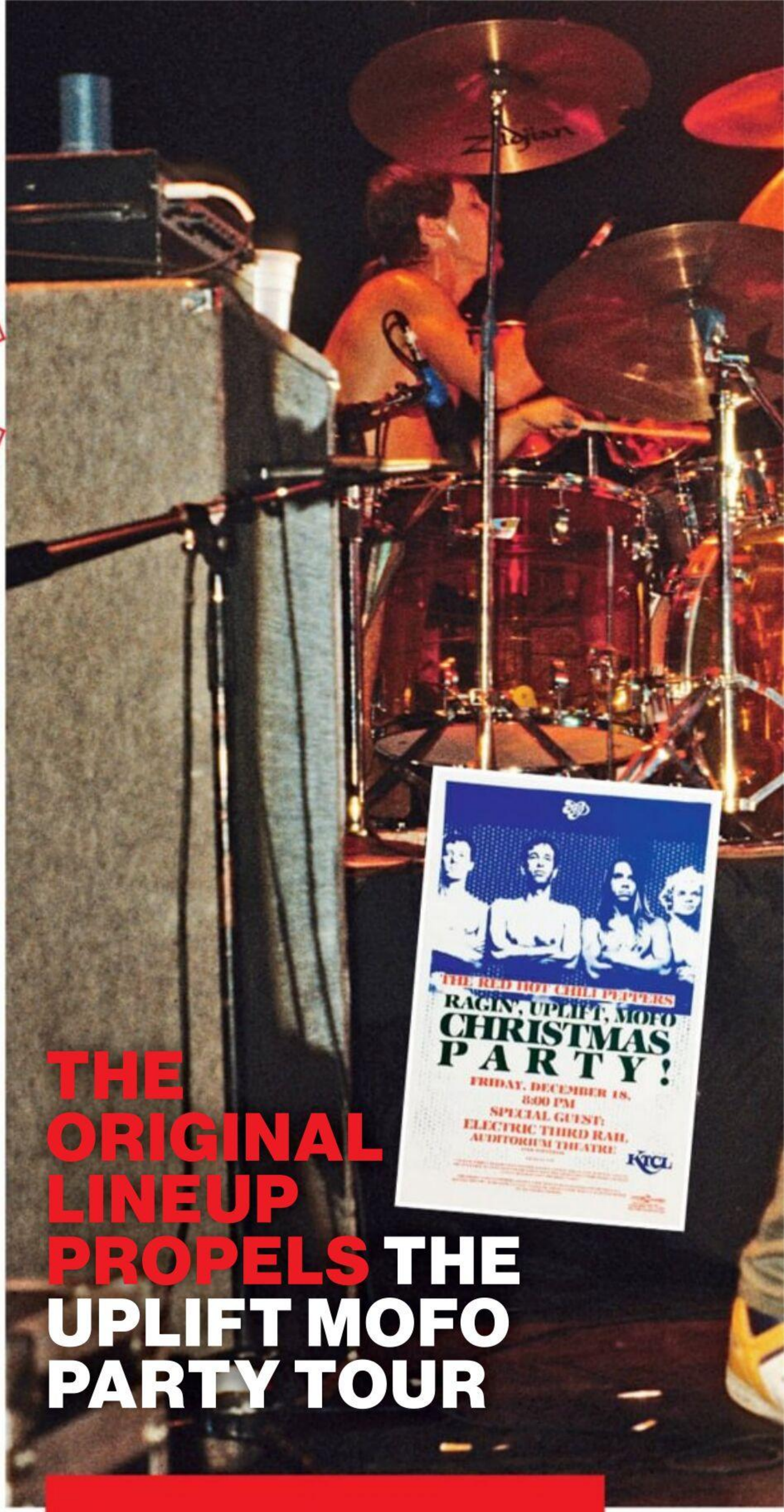
BY ANNIE ZALESKI

However much the band grooves
when heard through your headphones,
they shake, rattle and roll when onstage.
Here are their 10 top live moments (so far)

THERE'S A VERY GOOD REASON why the Red Hot Chili Peppers have been an in-demand headlining act for decades. Anchored by magnetic frontman Anthony Kiedis and the formidable rhythm section of bassist Flea and drummer Chad Smith, the band are an indefatigable live act that strikes a perfect balance between party-ready funk-rock and introspective balladry.

Kiedis is the rare vocalist who can handle these emotional opposites, as over the years he has developed a tender, melodic delivery that complements his signature motormouthed speak-sing style. Lithe and limber, Flea attacks his bass with reckless gusto — when he's not pulling off surprising feats like performing in the nude — while Smith is an affable drummer who veers between chaos and control without breaking a sweat.

Remarkably, the Red Hot Chili Peppers have maintained their popularity despite cycling through multiple guitarists, all of whom possess a distinctly different sound. Founding member Hillel Slovak helped establish the band as a funk-rock tour de force but also incorporated post-punk and hard rock into his riffage. After Slovak's 1988 death from a drug overdose, guitarist John Frusciante stepped in and helped corral the group's wilder tendencies into more streamlined (yet still vivacious)



THE ORIGINAL LINEUP PROPELS THE UPLIFT MOFO PARTY TOUR

The Uplift Mofo Party Plan **is the only Red Hot Chili Peppers album to feature all four of the band's founding members: Kiedis, Flea, Slovak and drummer Jack Irons. Fittingly, the tour to promote this breakthrough album (which includes "Behind the Sun") is also the only trek to feature this musical configuration.**

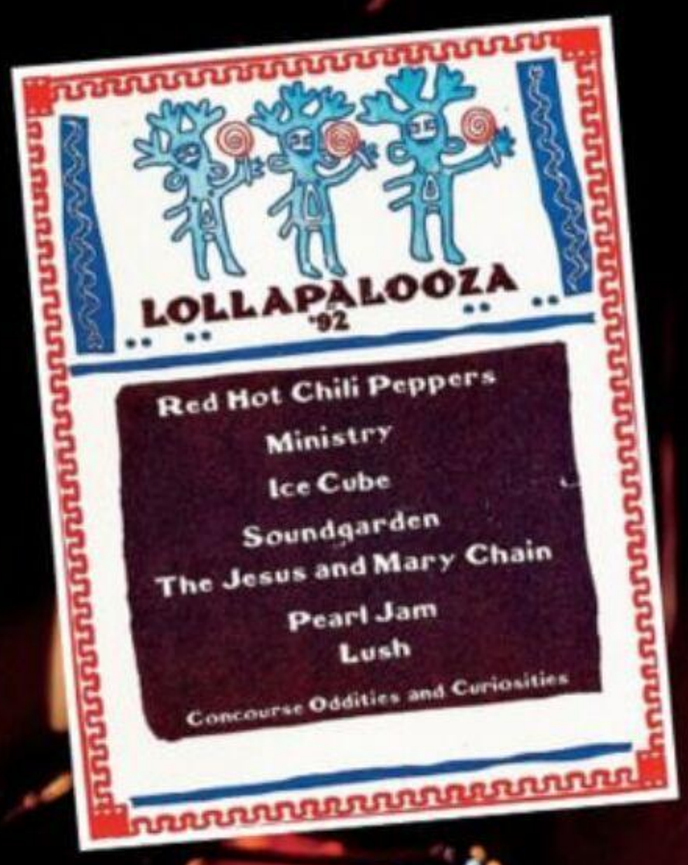
melodic grooves. In a fitting nod to his background playing with Jane's Addiction, Dave Navarro injected a darker psychedelic shade to the band's music, while Josh Klinghoffer brought a youthful, complex edge to his recordings and live presence.

Above all, the Red Hot Chili Peppers have never been afraid to make their own rules —or proudly wear their influences on their collective sleeve — as evidenced by the following 10 of their most memorable live tours or appearances.

KICK OUT THE JAMS

The band showed off its limitless energy at Minneapolis venue First Avenue on Dec. 1, 1986.

LOLLAPALOOZA
1992



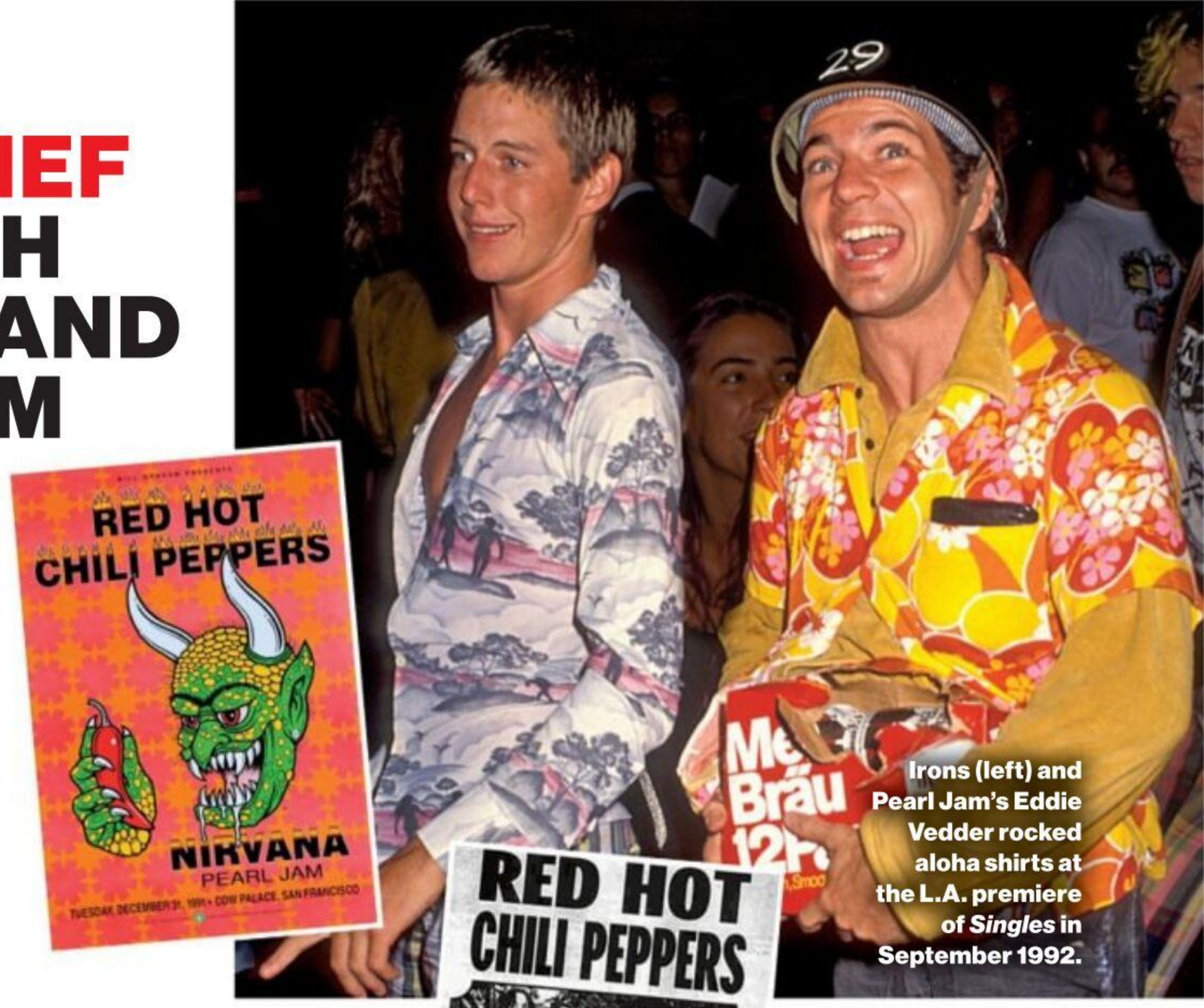
The second Lollapalooza tour cemented alternative rock's place in the '90s musical zeitgeist, in no small part to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Riding high on the success of *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, the band anchored the main stage alongside (among others) industrial icons Ministry, grungy hard rockers Soundgarden and rapper Ice Cube.

BIG NAME ENERGY

"Headlining Lollapalooza was a pretty big-ass deal for us," Kiedis admitted in *Scar Tissue*. They opened the second annual festival in 1992.

A TOO-BRIEF TOUR WITH NIRVANA AND PEARL JAM

Talk about a '90s rock bonanza that foreshadowed great things. In late 1991 and early 1992, RHCP did five shows with two eye-popping openers: a then-surging Nirvana, who were racing up the charts with *Nevermind*, and a young band named Pearl Jam, who were fresh off releasing their debut album, *Ten*.



Irons (left) and Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder rocked aloha shirts at the L.A. premiere of *Singles* in September 1992.

JOHN FRUSCIANTE RETURNS FOR THE CALIFORNICATION TOUR

Guitarist Frusciante came back to the fold after several years away just in time to play on 1999's *Californication*, an album that ushered in a new era for the band — as evidenced by the accompanying tour, which emphasized soulful midtempo tunes ("Scar Tissue") and taut funk-rock ("Around the World").

Unlike Flea (left) and Frusciante, Kiedis went hatless at their Shoreline Amphitheatre show in Mountain View, California, on Sept. 9, 2000.

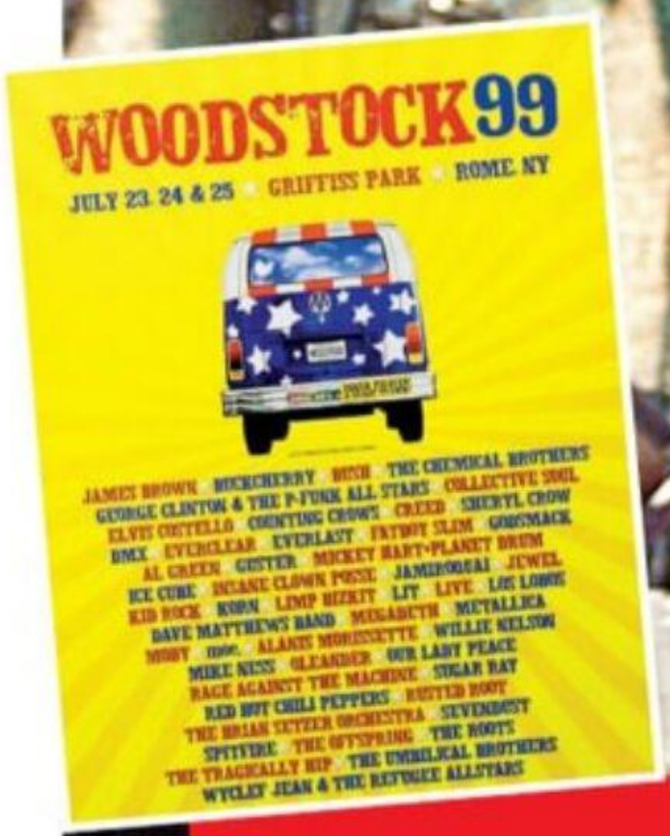
Fans often have lively discussions about the band's best shows of all time. Although consensus is downright impossible, the 2007 Reading Festival headlining slot routinely ranks high on these lists, thanks to a set heavy on recent music that reveals the group's locked-in musical chemistry.

A TRIUMPH AT READING 2007

I THINK, THEREFORE I ROCK

Kiedis, Flea and Smith (inset) laid down an intense set on Day 2 of the Reading Festival on Aug. 27, 2016. According to *The Guardian*, several devotees in attendance dressed up as hot peppers.

A NOTORIOUS WOODSTOCK '99 APPEARANCE



The headlining set at Woodstock '99 was infamous for all the wrong reasons. Not only did Flea perform the entire show naked, but their time onstage spiraled out of control after audience members started setting fires — dangerous gestures that preceded a pre-planned but too-on-the-nose set-closing cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Fire."

HIPPIE SHAKE

Channeling the vibes of the original Woodstock, Flea played the whole set on July 26, 1999, in the buff. However, when he saw women being groped in the crowd, he called it out onstage, pleading, "Everyone should be kind to each other out there."

A TIME FOR LEGENDS

Mentor George Clinton (left) joined Kiedis on the chorus of "Higher Ground" during the band's four-song set at their Rock Hall induction in Cleveland on April 14, 2012. Also playing on stage were Rolling Stone Ron Wood (below, left) and Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong (below, right), as well as Slash (of fellow Class of 2012 inductees Guns N' Roses, not pictured).

2012 ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

In a nod to their enduring influence on music, the Chilis were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2012. Early drummers Irons and Cliff Martinez guested on "Give It Away," while a signature cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" turned into a super-jam featuring Slash, George Clinton and members of Green Day.

PLAYING TO MASSIVE NUMBERS ON THE EMERALD ISLE

Headlining Ireland's Slane Castle is a milestone for any band, and on Aug. 23, 2003, the Red Hot Chili Peppers gave a career-making performance at the iconic venue in front of 80,000 fans. Supporting the global smash *By the Way*, the group tore through hits like the album's title track and "Under the Bridge."

SUPER BOWL 48 HALFTIME SHOW

When flamboyant soul-pop superstar Bruno Mars headlined the Super Bowl 48 halftime show in 2014, he invited the Red Hot Chili Peppers to make a guest appearance. The band stepped up to the occasion, giving a charismatic, high-energy take on "Give It Away" carried by Kiedis's groove-heavy vocals.

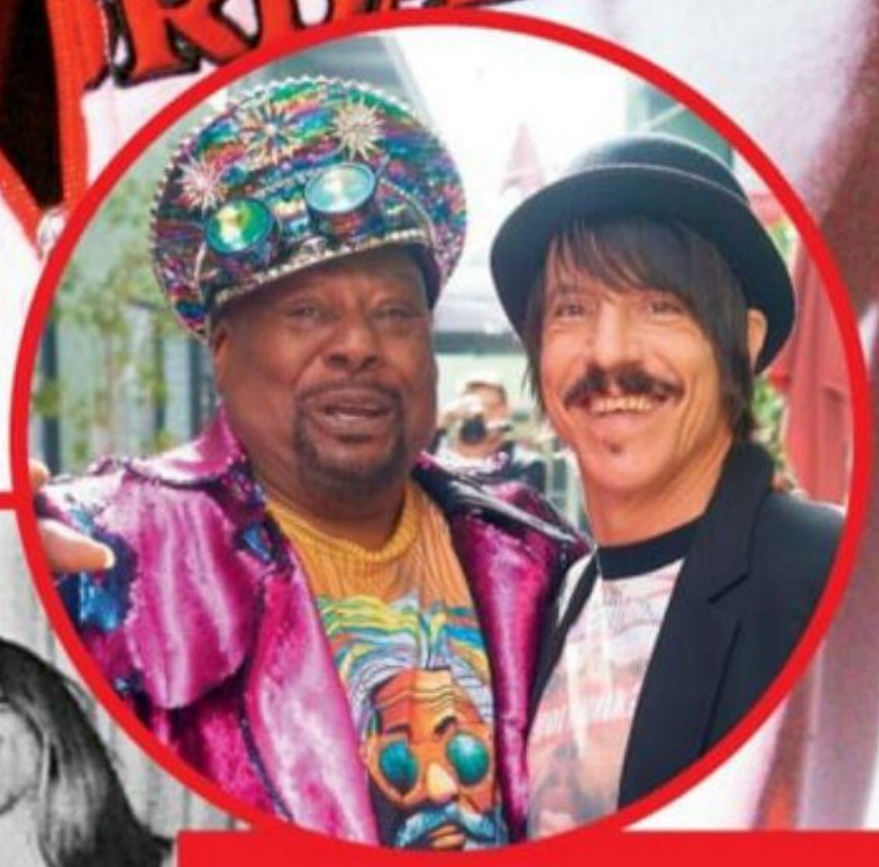
TEAM EFFORT

The singing was real, but the rest of "Give It Away" was a prerecorded track at the Super Bowl 48 Halftime Show at MetLife Stadium on February 2, 2014, in East Rutherford, New Jersey. As Flea explained to fans on the band website, they deliberately played unplugged so as not to fool anyone, and added, "I am grateful to the NFL for having us. And I am grateful to Bruno, who is a super talented young man for inviting us to be a part of his gig. I would do it all the same way again."

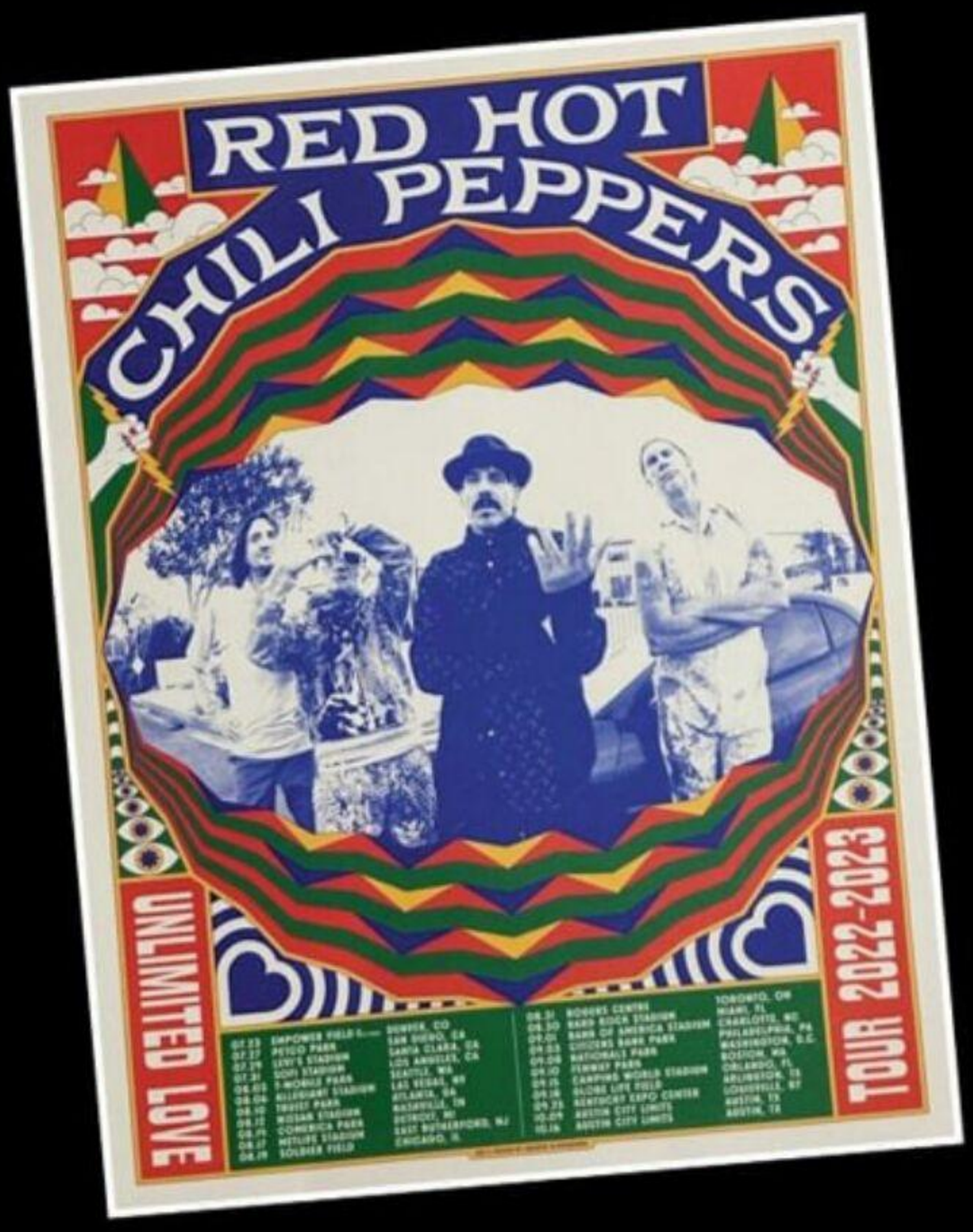
LIVE COLLABORATIONS WITH GEORGE CLINTON

FUNK BROTHERS

The Chilis have been fans and collaborators with Clinton (below, in the '80s; above, in 2005; and inset, in January 2024) from their earliest days. In an Instagram post on July 23, 2022, Flea wished Clinton a happy birthday and added, "we love you. you've always channeled the gods."



Funk legend Clinton produced the band's 1985 album *Freaky Styley*, kicking off a decades-long relationship that led to multiple live collaborations — highlighted by a cosmic, horn-heavy 1993 Grammys jam with The P-Funk All Stars on "Give It Away" and a ferocious Clinton guest spot on the same song in 2022.



2024 UNLIMITED LOVE TOUR

Don't show up late for the band's latest roadshow: Opening acts include hip-hop icons (Kid Cudi, Ice Cube), punk bands (Otoboke Beaver), Afrobeat legends (Seun Kuti & Egypt 80) and rockers (Wand). For more information and tickets, visit redhotchilipepperstour2024.com

MAY 18
Tokyo, Japan

MAY 20
Tokyo, Japan

MAY 28
with Ken Carson and IRONTOM
Ridgefield, Washington

MAY 31
with Ken Carson and IRONTOM
George, Washington

JUN 2
with Ken Carson and IRONTOM
Wheatland, California

JUN 5
with Kid Cudi and IRONTOM
Salt Lake City, Utah

JUN 7
with Wand and IRONTOM
Albuquerque, New Mexico

JUN 15
Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival
Manchester, Tennessee

JUN 18
with IRONTOM
West Palm Beach, Florida

JUN 21
with Ice Cube and IRONTOM
Tampa, Florida

JUN 23
with Ice Cube and IRONTOM
Hollywood, Florida

JUN 26
with Ice Cube and IRONTOM
Raleigh, North Carolina

JUN 28
with Ice Cube and IRONTOM
Virginia Beach, Virginia

JUL 2
with Kid Cudi and IRONTOM
Burgettstown, Pennsylvania

JUL 5
with IRONTOM
Cincinnati, Ohio

JUL 12
with Wand and IRONTOM
Darien Center, New York

JUL 15
with Wand and IRONTOM
Toronto, Ontario

JUL 17
with Seun Kuti and IRONTOM
Toronto, Ontario

JUL 20
Minnesota Yacht Club Festival
St. Paul, Minnesota

JUL 22
with Seun Kuti and IRONTOM
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

JUL 25
with Otoboke Beaver and IRONTOM
Noblesville, Indiana

JUL 27
Harley-Davidson Homecoming Festival
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

JUL 30
with Otoboke Beaver and IRONTOM
St. Louis, Missouri

HOW I GOT THAT SHOT

BY NEAL PRESTON

My photo shoot with the Red Hot Chili Peppers was a garden variety, one-off assignment for *People* magazine way back around late 1989, early 1990. I grabbed a quick flight from L.A. up to San Francisco and caught up with them at the Warfield Theatre right after they had finished their sound check.

At the time, I'd heard of them but I had no idea what genre of music they fell into. Were they punk? Post-punk? Rap? Metal-rap? Grunge? Death-pop-punk? Any or all of the above? At any rate, they were quite friendly and clearly glad to cooperate during our pre-show group photo session. (You never know — most bands have at least one member who's a camera-shy, "do we really have to do this?"-asking pain in the ass.)

I chose two areas backstage that I knew would work for photos, and I led them to location No. 1. The moment I put my Nikon camera up to my eye, all hell broke loose.

It turned out that I was shooting a rock music version of the Marx Brothers. No serious photos allowed, and none taken. When the show started, I shot from the wings and was lucky to keep up with them. There wasn't one square inch of that stage that they didn't hit.

Years later, I had my first gallery show ever in Los Angeles. It was a big deal for me — and as it turned out, one of my invited guests brought Anthony Kiedis along as his plus-one. As soon as Anthony saw me, he grabbed me and pulled me over to the RHCP print I'd chosen for the show. "Neal... you see that photo of us you're exhibiting?" he asked.

I replied, "Of course. What do you think?"

He looked me dead in the eye and said, "I love it — but I don't remember shooting it at all!"

I still don't know if he was yanking my chain or not. I suspect he wasn't.

CANDID CAMERA

Celebrated photographer Neal Preston has toured with some of rock's greatest bands, including Led Zeppelin, The Who and Queen, and has shot music royalty including David Bowie, Whitney Houston, Stevie Nicks, Bruce Springsteen and many more. In a 30-year association with *People* that began in 1979, Preston became the magazine's most assigned photographer, shooting more than 700 subjects.

I WANNA BE YOUR DOGG

Flea, Snoop Dogg, Kiedis and Smith mugged for the cameras on the MTV VMAs red carpet at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, on Aug. 28, 2022.

They may be highly decorated rock veterans now, but the Chilis are still exploring new sounds, even as they become part of the pop culture firmament

REACHING A HIGHER GROUND

BY DAVID MICHAEL BROWN

FOR ANYONE LUCKY ENOUGH TO witness an early 1983 incarnation of the Red Hot Chili Peppers performing a frenzied punk cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Fire" to a shocked but enraptured audience at the notorious Los Angeles strip joint Kit Kat Club, it would be hard to reconcile the naked-but-for-a-strategic-sock exhibitionists of yore with the professional stadium fillers of today.

Now, at this stage in their career, the Chilis have become the elder statesmen of rock. And while the "Funky Monks" have certainly grown old disgracefully, they now head down Hollywood Boulevard to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame rather than to fuel the nefarious habits of their teenage years. Flea told *Variety* prior to the 2022 dedication, attended by Woody Harrelson and George Clinton, that he and Anthony Kiedis were street kids "doing stupid little crimes, hustling for food. I've walked over every one of those stars — every sidewalk, every crack, every one of them. To be recognized and be a part of the physical fabric of those sidewalks means a lot to me." Also in 2022, the Rock & Roll Hall of Famers cemented their legend status by winning the Global Icon Award at the MTV VMAs.

The Getaway, released six years before that illustrious award in 2016, heralded a new era for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. It was the band's first long-player since 1989's *Mothers' Milk* that did not enlist Rick Rubin's prowess at the mixing desk. The record was instead produced by Brian Burton, aka "Danger Mouse," who also co-wrote five of its tracks, while longtime Radiohead collaborator Nigel Godrich sat behind the controls. >

UNDER THE GRAFFITI BRIDGE

After being introduced by comedians Cheech and Chong as one of their "favorite bands of all time," the Chilis hit the stage and performed "Black Summer" and "Can't Stop" at the 2022 MTV VMAs.

According to *The Guardian*, the presence of guitarist Josh Klinghoffer heralded a "spacier, melancholy feel that mutes the burliness of previous records."

The third single off *The Getaway*, "Sick Love," was inspired by "Bennie and the Jets." So who better to play piano and co-write the track than Elton John and his collaborator Bernie Taupin? "As soon as he touched the piano it was magical," gushed Kiedis to British tabloid *The Sun*. "You try not to be a fanboy, but it is Sir Elton John... It's a real honor for us to have him on the record."

In 2022, the band release not one but two albums in quick succession. *Unlimited Love* and *Return of the Dream Canteen* garnered much acclaim and boasted the singles "Black Summer" and "Tippa My Tongue" respectively. *Unlimited Love* was hailed as a return to former glory largely due to John Frusciante rejoining the band, while *Canteen* was considered more introspective. Together, they encapsulated the band's maturing sensibilities.

Their current Global Stadium Tour, which opened in Seville, Spain, on June 4, 2022, and promises to run throughout 2024, is more of a celebratory affair. It's a testament to the band's standing that support acts throughout the tour

STAR TISSUE

Kiedis, Flea, Frusciante and Smith received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on March 31, 2022 (above and right). "To me, this is not a story of individuals," Kiedis gushed at the time. "I love Chad, I love Flea, I love John greatly. They're amazingly talented — Flea's at one with the bass, John is my favorite guitar player of all time and Chad Smith is the finest drummer in the land."

included Iggy Pop, Beck, Ice Cube, Post Malone, The Mars Volta, The Strokes, Thundercat and St. Vincent.

Often cited as one of the reasons that the band has gone the distance are the individual member's extracurricular activities. As if releasing two albums and touring the planet weren't enough, Flea has also continued his acting career, recently appearing in two episodes of the Disney+ series *Obi-Wan Kenobi* and Damien Chazelle's outrageous film *Babylon* (2022). The bassist, who played the national anthem at Kobe Bryant's last-ever game for the L.A. Lakers in 2016, has consistently worked in film since his uncredited debut in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Outsiders* in 1983 and can be seen in *Back to the Future Part II* (1989) and *III* (1990), *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *Baby Driver* (2017). Kiedis also showed promise at an early age, sharing screen time with Sylvester Stallone in *F.I.S.T.* (1978), but his subsequent career has been more sporadic. His highlight as a thespian? Shooting himself in the >

foot in Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* (1991).

And while the band's music regularly appears in films, former drummer Cliff Martinez has made a name for himself as a composer of note working with Steven Soderbergh on *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989), *Traffic* (2000), *Solaris* (2002) and *Contagion* (2011). Other scores include *Drive* (2011) for director Nicolas Winding Refn, *Only God Forgives* (2013) and *The Neon Demon* (2016).

Despite their solo ambitions, the band did appear together on *The Simpsons* in 1993, albeit with Arik Marshall as Frusciante had left the band. In the Season 4 finale, "Krusty Gets Kancelled," they are booked to play Moe's Tavern believing that there would be an audience of 30,000. When they are greeted only by a drunk Barney chanting, "We want Chili Willy!" they instead play "Give It Away" at a Krusty the Clown benefit gig.

Many bands have cited the RHCP's hardcore funk and Kiedis' distinctive hip-hop inflected vocals as a major influence. From Mr. Bungle and Primus to Rage Against the Machine and System of a Down, all have elements of the Chilis' sound and stagecraft. It's a sign of the times that the Red Hot Chili Peppers have managed to outlast many of the bands that they inspired.

"Longevity is not for everybody," Kiedis told music journalist Zane Lowe during a relaxed 2023 chat for Apple Music when the pair discussed the band's staying power. "I don't think everyone should even feel bad about having a particular life span as a band. It's just that some bands were made to have a shorter life span. It's not for everyone, and then sometimes it's fun to do it for a while and then do something else.

"I think it's the chemistry, you know," he continued. "It's really not the individual so much as the totality, and for whatever reason, there is a healthy competitive brotherly familial element that keeps us together because we have been through so much together and we kind of depend on each other, and then maybe just luck. Good luck of the right people having found each other."

IN THE RUNNING

Kiedis, Flea and Chad Smith sprang into action (on cue!) at the 2022 MTV VMAs.

After joining in the drum battle high jinks, the Chilis returned to perform frenetic versions of Funkadelic's 1974 floor-filler "Standing on the Verge of Getting It On" with the Roots as well as their own hit, "Give It Away."

"THAT WAS CUTE. DO YOU PLAY FOR THE LUKEWARM CHILI PEPPERS?"

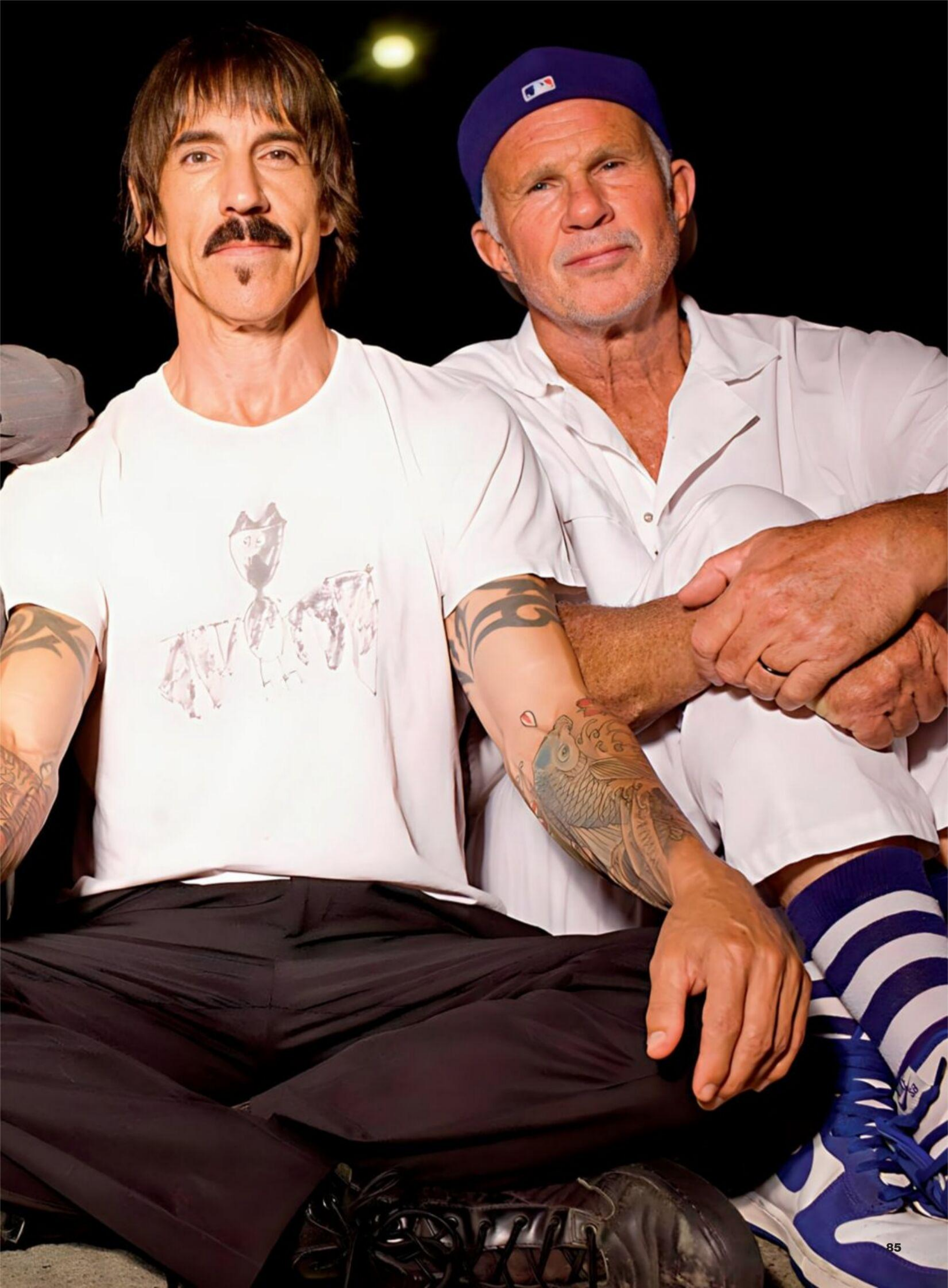
Have you ever seen drummer Chad Smith and actor Will Ferrell in the same room? After years of jibes and jokes about the pair's similar looks, the two appeared together on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in May 2014, dressed in matching Kiss tees. Better yet, it was time to decide who was the better drummer in a contest that ended in a surprise Red Hot Chili Peppers performance of the Blue Öyster Cult classic "(Don't Fear) The Reaper," while Ferrell, in a nod to his well-known *Saturday Night Live* sketch, played "more" cowbell. The mock feud continued when the pair hosted the Red Hot Benefit Comedy + Music Show & Quinceanera at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Foo Fighters' Taylor Hawkins, Mötley Crüe's Tommy Lee, Fred Armisen, Fleetwood Mac's Mick Fleetwood and The Police's Stewart Copeland all took part in the team drum-off.

Will Ferrell (left) and Smith psyched each other out on the *Tonight Show* couch. As host Jimmy Fallon said, "Whoever whacks, smacks and slaps the skins the best wins."

"We're going to have a drum-off to see who the real Chad Smith is," Smith told *Rolling Stone* prior to the big event. "I'm all for it. But unless Will's been practicing or is secretly a crazy, wild drummer, I think it'll be evident right off the bat who the real Chad Smith is. I'm ready to take him down."

CAN'T STOP

"No," Kiedis told Australian periodical *Review* when asked if he had any plans to celebrate the band's 40th anniversary. "No plans to mark the occasion, other than maybe to sit there and smile at Chad Smith, or give John a hug, or make some wisecrack to Flea. I don't really celebrate anniversaries too much: I'm one foot in today, and one foot in dreaming about the possibilities of what tomorrow might hold. I'm much less interested in keeping track of the days, weeks, months, years that have gone by."



FUN AND FUNKY

The image the band gave off in photos, even as early as this pic taken at the Cabaret Metro in Chicago on Oct. 26, 1985, belied the serious songcraft they nurtured from their teen years.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS IN REVIEW

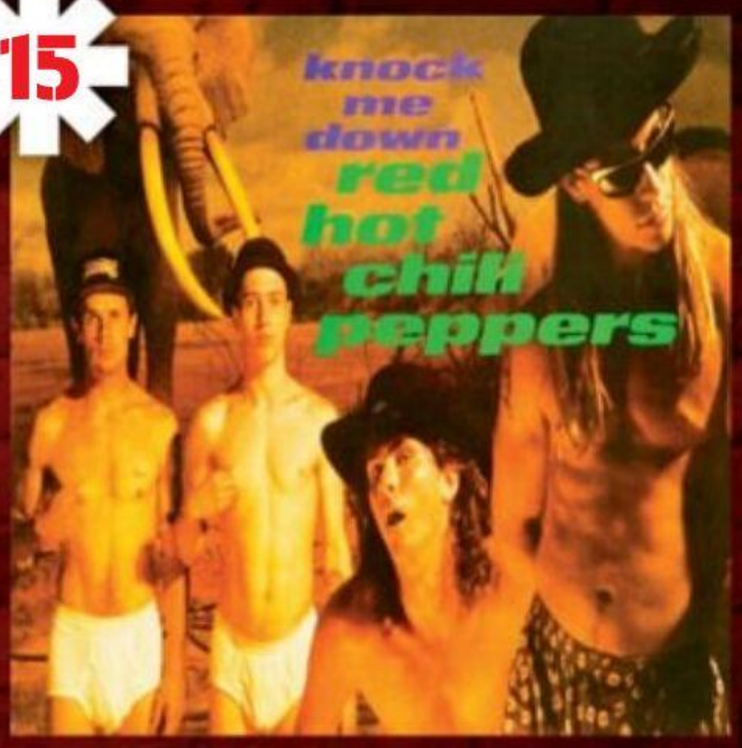
BY CHUCK ARNOLD

The 15 essential tracks that define their sound

15 "HIGHER GROUND"/ "KNOCK ME DOWN"

1989

The Chili Peppers' fourth studio album, *Mother's Milk*, was a nurturing rebirth — a reset after the fatal overdose of founding guitarist Hillel Slovak in 1988 and the subsequent departure of original drummer Jack Irons (they were replaced by John Frusciante and Chad Smith, respectively). Call it a tie between their radical rampaging of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" and "Knock Me Down," a transformative takedown of their drug demons: "If you see me getting high / knock me down."



14 "BLACK SUMMER"

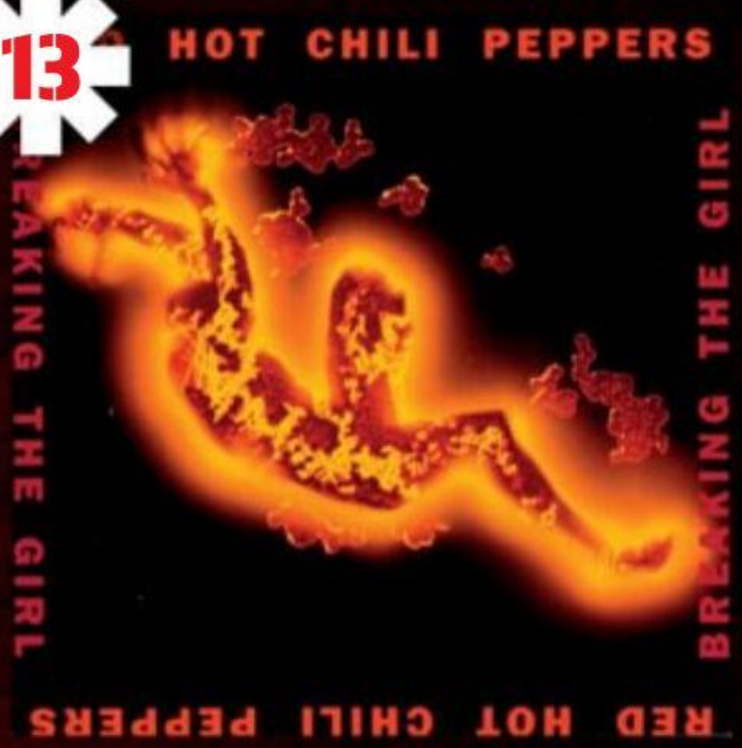
2022

On what was then the first Chili Peppers single to feature Frusciante since 2006, his guitar-god presence is instantly felt. The band was, indeed, back together again on the first single from *Unlimited Love*, which went on to become their 14th No. 1 hit on the Billboard Alternative Airplay chart — a record they would extend with "Tippa My Tongue" later in 2022.

13 "BREAKING THE GIRL"

1991

The fourth single from their certified classic *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* was inspired by girlfriend drama that frontman Anthony Kiedis had with his ex, Carmen Hawk. But the Mellotron and Frusciante's Zeppelin-esque guitar make it feel more like a psych-rock dream.



11 "MY FRIENDS"

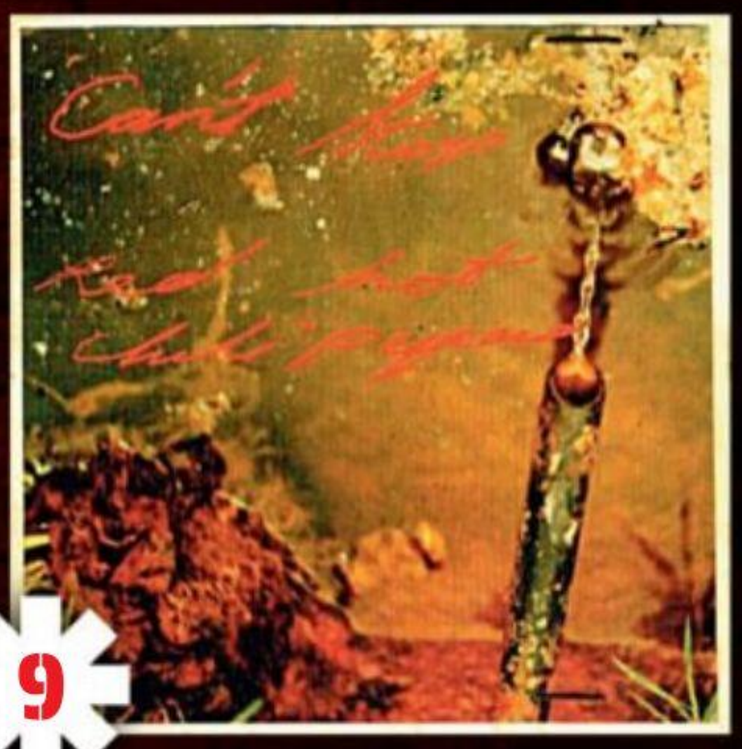
1995

After the multiplatinum success of 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, Frusciante made the first of his exits and was replaced by Jane's Addiction axman Dave Navarro for the band's sixth studio album, *One Hot Minute*. And on that LP's highlight — an ode to the spirit of brotherhood at the core of the Chili Peppers — you can almost feel how much they missed some of their friends who were no longer rocking with them.

10 "SNOW (HEY OH)"

2006

On this soft-rocking standout from their Grammy-winning double album *Stadium Arcadium*, the Chili Peppers wash all of their sins away in the snow. "It's about surviving, starting fresh," Kiedis told *Rolling Stone* in 2006. "I've made a mess of everything, but I have a blank slate — a canvas of snow — and I get to start over."



9 "CAN'T STOP"

2002

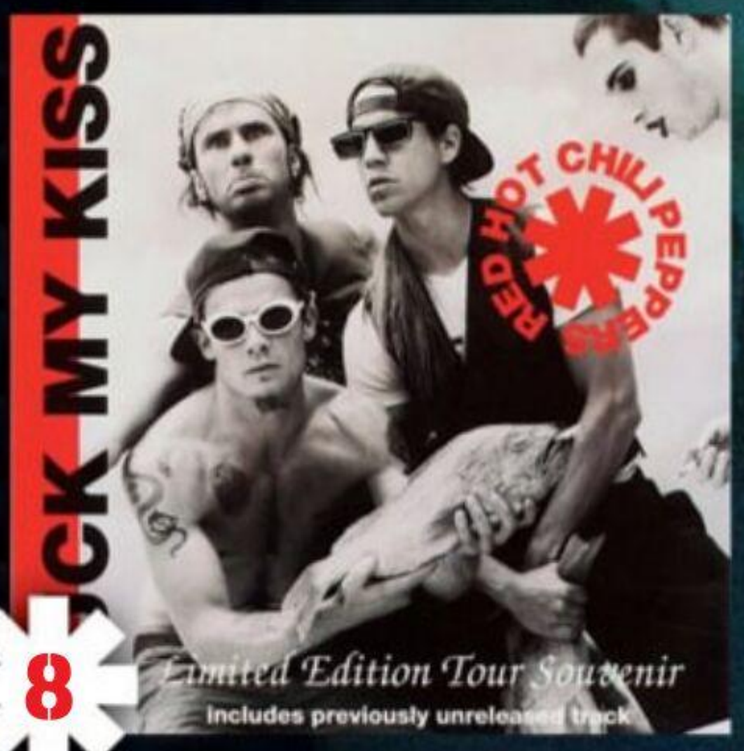
Just when you thought the Chili Peppers might be mellowing out — with Kiedis and his bassist brother Flea nearing 40 — they reconnected with their rap-rock roots with the kind of Big D energy of those wild boys who used to perform with nothing but tube socks covering their junk.

"ME AND MY FRIENDS"

1987

Like a slam dance with all your dudes, this rap-rock rave-up from the band's third studio LP, *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan* — which has got to be the most perfect Chili Peppers album title ever — is a group-hugging riot.

12



8

"SUCK MY KISS"

1991

Sticking its tongue all the way down your throat, this single most definitely put the "Sex" in *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. With Kiedis in full swag effect, thrusting and thrashing with lusty abandon, he simply owns the funk-rock groove — and, most likely, any lips that he should so desire. (With consent, of course.) When he spits that "Your mouth was made to suck my kiss," it might have almost been vulgar — but for the fact that he had never been studlier.

UNITED IN SONG

On writing music, Kiedis (here in 1992) told *Forbes* in 2022, "Our magic is we have chemistry and we have love and we have hate and we have disagreements and we have harmony, depending on any given moment, and all of that is lyrically inspiring to me."

HOT HEAD

Flea was on fire on Aug. 12, 1991, during the first Lollapalooza festival, which included a stop at Waterloo Village in Stanhope, New Jersey.

4

"DANI CALIFORNIA"

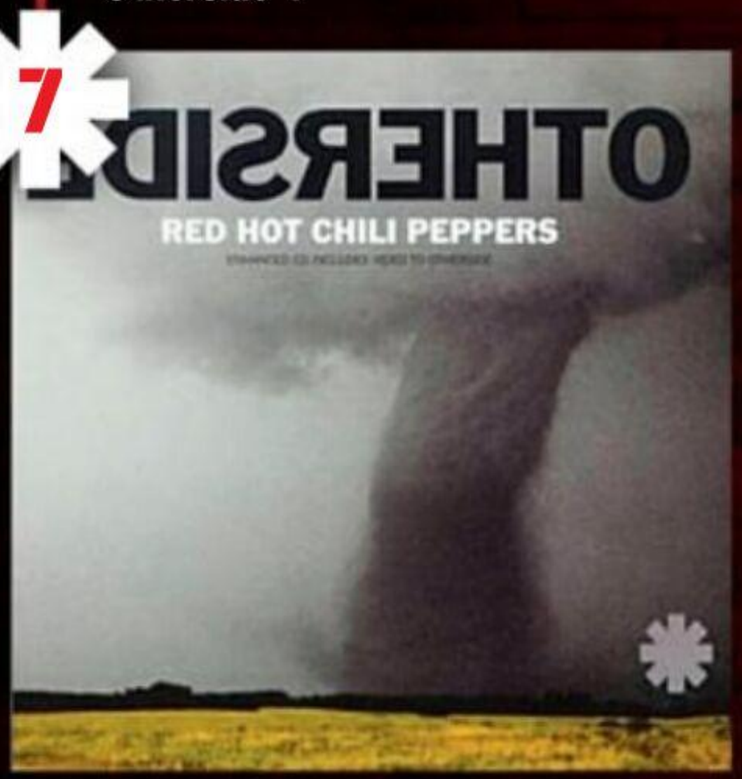
2006

Another homage to their home state from the California boys, the first single from *Stadium Arcadium* hit it out of the park by becoming the band's third — and most recent — Top 10 hit on the Billboard Hot 100 and winning them two of their six Grammys. The title character — who moved from the South to California before meeting a tragic end — is a composite of women whom Kiedis dated, again exposing the true grit behind delusions of Cali glamour.

7 "OTHERSIDE"

1999

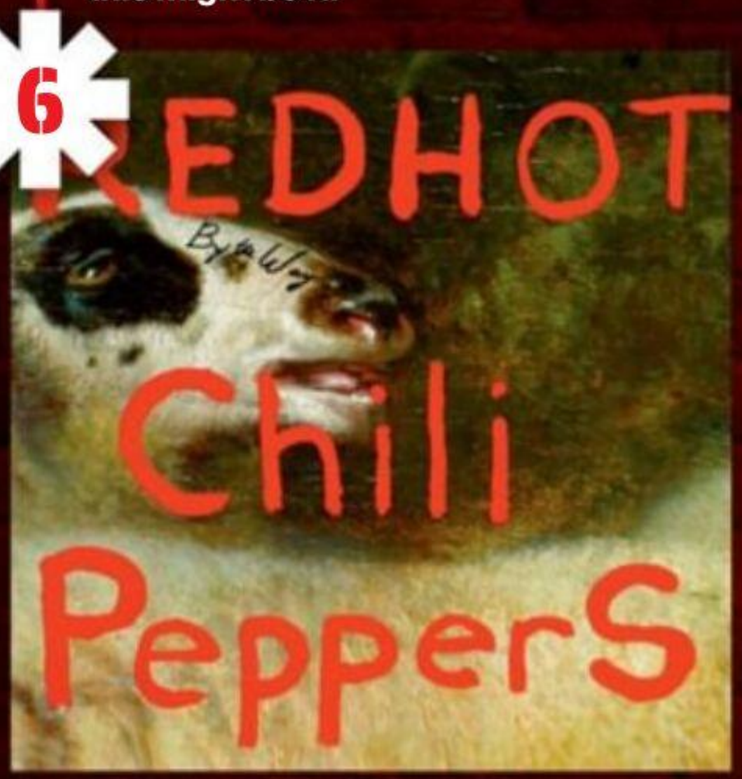
Perhaps no song sums up the unlikely journey of the Chili Peppers from a party band struggling with addiction to elder rock statesmen who are still going strong in their 60s than the third single from their blockbuster *Californication*. Because, really, who thought they would make it to the "Otherside"?



6 "BY THE WAY"

2002

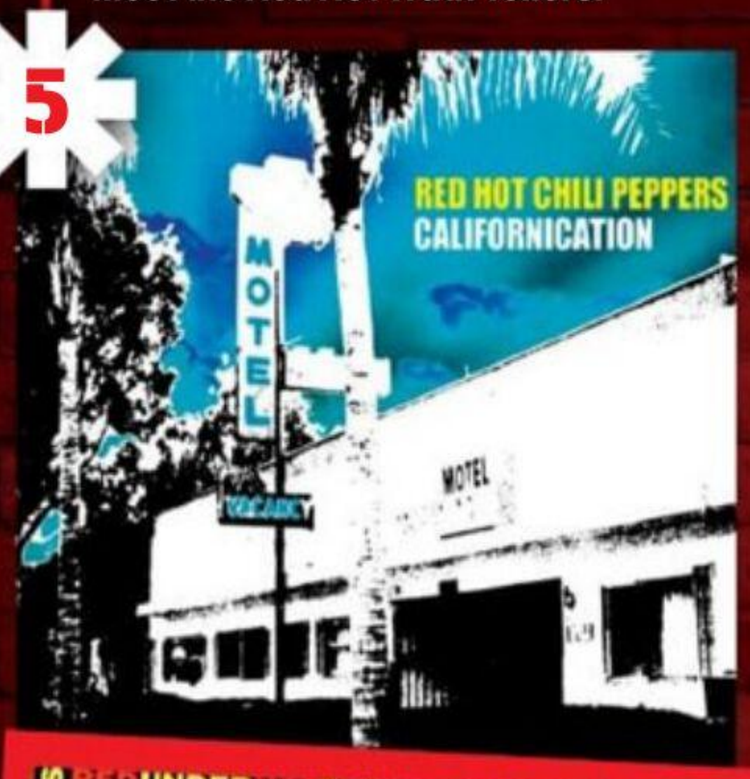
The title track of the band's eighth studio album — and one of eight LPs produced by their studio guru, Rick Rubin — is a wicked whiplash between soothing strumming and bruising moshing to the bumpity bump of Flea's breakneck bass. If one song could encapsulate the Chili Peppers in 3 1/2 minutes, this might be it.



5 "CALIFORNICATION"

1999

For a band that was born in Los Angeles and has repped Cali culture from day one, the name of their seventh studio album captured, in a way, their very essence. But the moody, melancholy title track calls out the "hardcore soft porn" reality of Hollywood's plastic facade: "Pay your surgeon very well to break the spell of aging / Celebrity skin — is this your chin or is that war you're waging?" Meet the Red Hot Truth Tellers.



3 "GIVE IT AWAY"

1991

With none other than George Clinton having produced their second album, 1985's *Freaky Styley*, you know that the Chili Peppers were schooled in the ways of the funk by the man who brought one nation under a groove. And they were at their absolute funkiest on the lead single from *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, which won them their first Grammy (Best Hard Rock Performance With Vocal) in 1992. It's not only their very best banger, but a definitive track in the rap-rock genre.

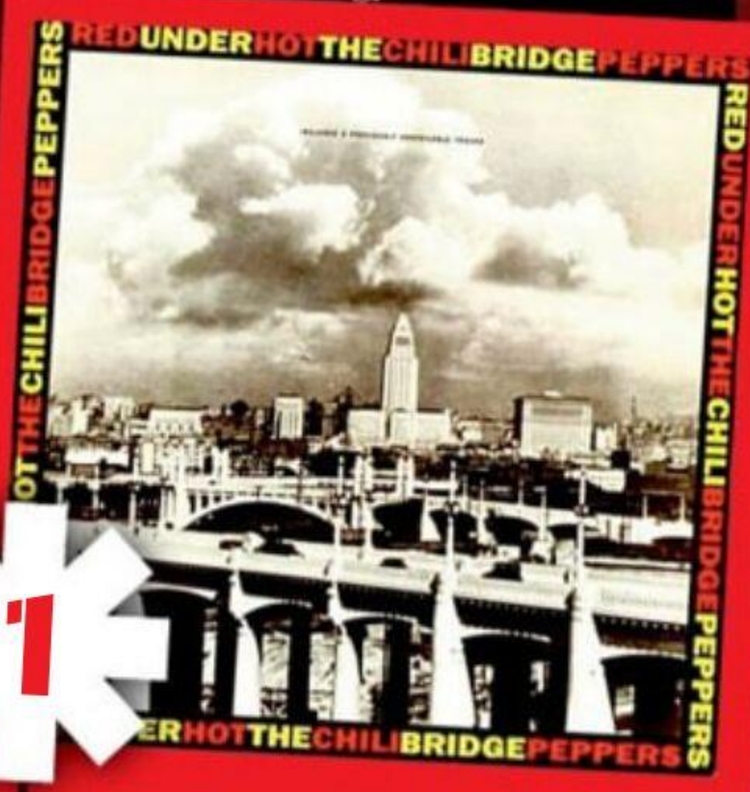
2 "SCAR TISSUE"

1999

There is a very real reason why Kiedis chose this tune as the title of his 2004 memoir: The Grammy-winning song — the second of his band's three Top 10 singles on the Billboard Hot 100 — sums up all the emotional, mental and no doubt physical wounds that he and the rest of the Chili Peppers have overcome to survive against all odds. Here, the scars left behind — even long after the scabs have healed — are the mark of raw beauty.

1 "UNDER THE BRIDGE"

1992



There is a song in every truly great act's career that makes you rethink what you thought was possible for — and from — them. A song that makes you see them in an entirely new — and, in this case, more nuanced — light. For the Chili Peppers, "Under the Bridge" was that song. The band's biggest hit, which went all the way to No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100, was a revelation that took us under their skin and into their souls. Kiedis — displaying a depth we'd never heard or felt before — makes you feel like his "only friend" along his lonely struggle to stay clean.

THE STUDIO ALBUM CHECKLIST

BY NICHOLAS WHITE

TONGUE-TICKLING

A STRONGER KICK

EXTRA SPICY!

THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

1984

PRODUCER: Andy Gill

The Chilis' first album had a manic, bass-heavy energy straight from sweaty Hollywood clubs, with Anthony Kiedis on vocals, Flea on bass guitar, Cliff Martinez on drums and Jack Sherman on guitar. "We're going to spread the cosmic love vibe all over the world and universe," Kiedis told MTV in 1984.

BLOOD SUGAR SEX MAGIK

1991

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

One of the most influential and enduring party albums of the 1990s (and Flea's personal favorite Chilis album), *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* cemented the group's superstar status with generation-defining songs and videos like "Under the Bridge" and "Give It Away."

ONE HOT MINUTE

1995

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

This is the only RHCP record — including radio hits "Aeroplane" and "My Friends" — to feature Dave Navarro on guitar. Frusciante, who, uncomfortable with fame, had stepped away from the band, admitted he doesn't listen to the guitar-heavy album. Chad Smith said in 2014, "We don't really feel that connected to that record anymore."

FREAKY STYLEY

1985

PRODUCER: George Clinton

The Chilis' second album — cleaner in production under music industry veteran George Clinton — introduced founding RHCP guitarist Hillel Slovak to the world. The group made a cameo in 1986's skateboard flick *Thrashin'* performing their frenetic song "Blackeyed Blonde" from *Freaky Styley*, appearing in the same scene with Josh Brolin's Corey Webster.

THE UPLIFT MOFO PARTY PLAN

1987

PRODUCER: Michael Beinhorn

All founding RHCP members together! Kiedis, Slovak and Flea were reunited with drummer Jack Irons on *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan*, which some critics and fans alike have said is the band's most rocking album. Despite two enduring singles, "Fight Like a Brave" and "Behind the Sun," these songs have rarely been a part of the band's live performances.

MOTHER'S MILK

1989

PRODUCER: Michael Beinhorn

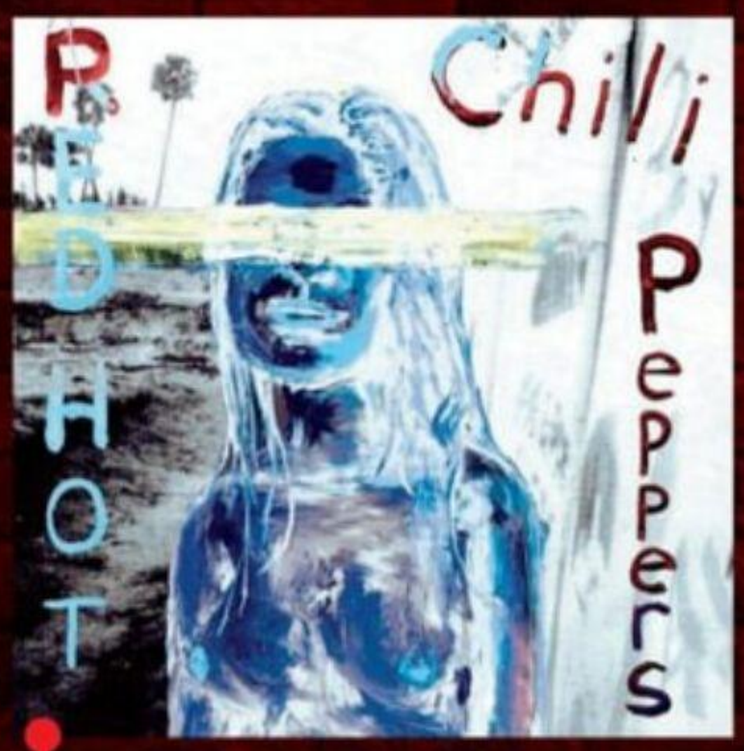
The bass-thumping cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" on *Mother's Milk* put the Chilis at No. 11 on the Billboard U.S. Modern Rock Tracks chart, a commercial bump for the band. Flea said in 2022, "[Stevie] has always been really generous of spirit and kind and engaging."

CALIFORNICATION

1999

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

The bestselling Chilis album (16 million copies sold worldwide, certified platinum seven times in the U.S., billions of streams) may be known for hits like the title track, but Kiedis wrote one song of personal significance to another singer — "Emit Remmus," or "summertime" spelled backward, penned after meeting then-girlfriend Melanie "Sporty Spice" Chisholm.



BY THE WAY

2002

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

RHCP's eighth album was a shift in sound to quiet, more melodic and far less bass-driven. One band member, unsurprisingly, wasn't a huge fan. "Flea would tell me, 'This is so much less fun because I feel like my voice doesn't count as much,'" producer Rick Rubin later said.

CARRIED AWAY

All may seem normal, but the third-time Coachella headliners got caught in a sandstorm during their performance on April 14, 2013. As CNN reported Kiedis telling the crowd, "I feel like Lawrence of Arabia... I'm going to go home and throw up a sandbox for my small child."

STADIUM ARCADIUM

2006

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

Exhibiting excellent taste, Frusciante credited Brandy and Beyoncé for influencing his bluesy guitar notes on the 122-minute *Stadium Arcadium*, which won Best Rock Album at the Grammys, along with Best Rock Song ("Dani California"): "I'm crazy about [Brandy's] album, *Aphrodisiac*." On the atmosphere around making the record, Kiedis told MTV News, "There was very little tension, very little anxiety, very little weirdness going on."

I'M WITH YOU

2011

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

With the introduction of guitarist Josh Klinghoffer after Frusciante left for the second time, the Chilis wrote songs for a year for *I'm with You*. Explaining the length of the process, Kiedis said, "That way, we can let the truth come out and figure out how to be a band with a different guitar player." British artist Damien Hirst designed the album's fly-on-a-pill cover.

THE GETAWAY

2016

PRODUCER: Danger Mouse

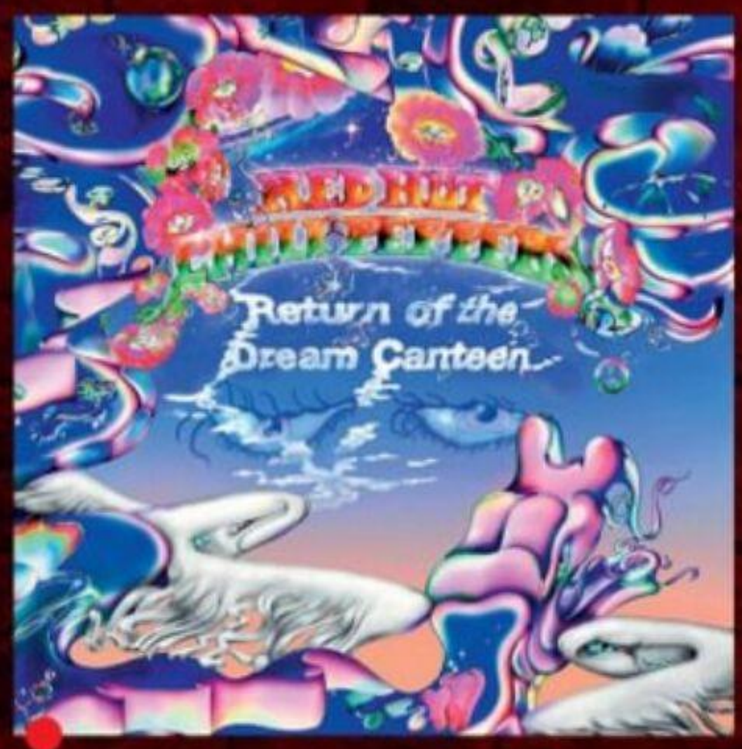
The final Klinghoffer album — and, with Gnarls Barkley's Danger Mouse, the only non-Rick Rubin produced Chilis album in 30 years — incorporates glimmers of RHCP's famous bass-heavy groove. Klinghoffer revealed after leaving the group, "I'm not particularly fond of the two records [during my era]."

UNLIMITED LOVE

2022

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

The first No. 1 Chilis album since *Stadium Arcadium*, *Unlimited Love* came from the same recording sessions as *Return of the Dream Canteen*, which was released six months later. Frusciante rejoined for the third time and Rubin was back as producer. "When [Frusciante] is in the band, we're able to communicate without speaking," Flea told KROQ's Kevan Kenney in 2022. "[He] has a profound impact on everything that we do."



RETURN OF THE DREAM CANTEEN

2022

PRODUCER: Rick Rubin

The first time in 17 years one band had two albums debut at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 album sales chart in the same year — after System of a Down had set the benchmark in 2005 — the Chilis achieved the feat with *Unlimited Love* and this album, which featured a tribute to Eddie Van Halen. Flea told KROQ this second 2022 release was more festive than their first. "It has things that are lighter," he noted in October of that year, "and at the same time, it's a super-explosive record, and it has a heaviness to it."

STILL KICKING

Toward the end of his memoir, *Acid for the Children*, Flea tried to capture what has made the Chilis (here in a recent, undated photo) such an enduring band, finally landing at a mix of spontaneity and fate. "There was no forethought on our behalf," he wrote. "We had nothing to do with it. Without the divine powers that set up the whole thing the band would never have lasted this now nearly four decades."

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